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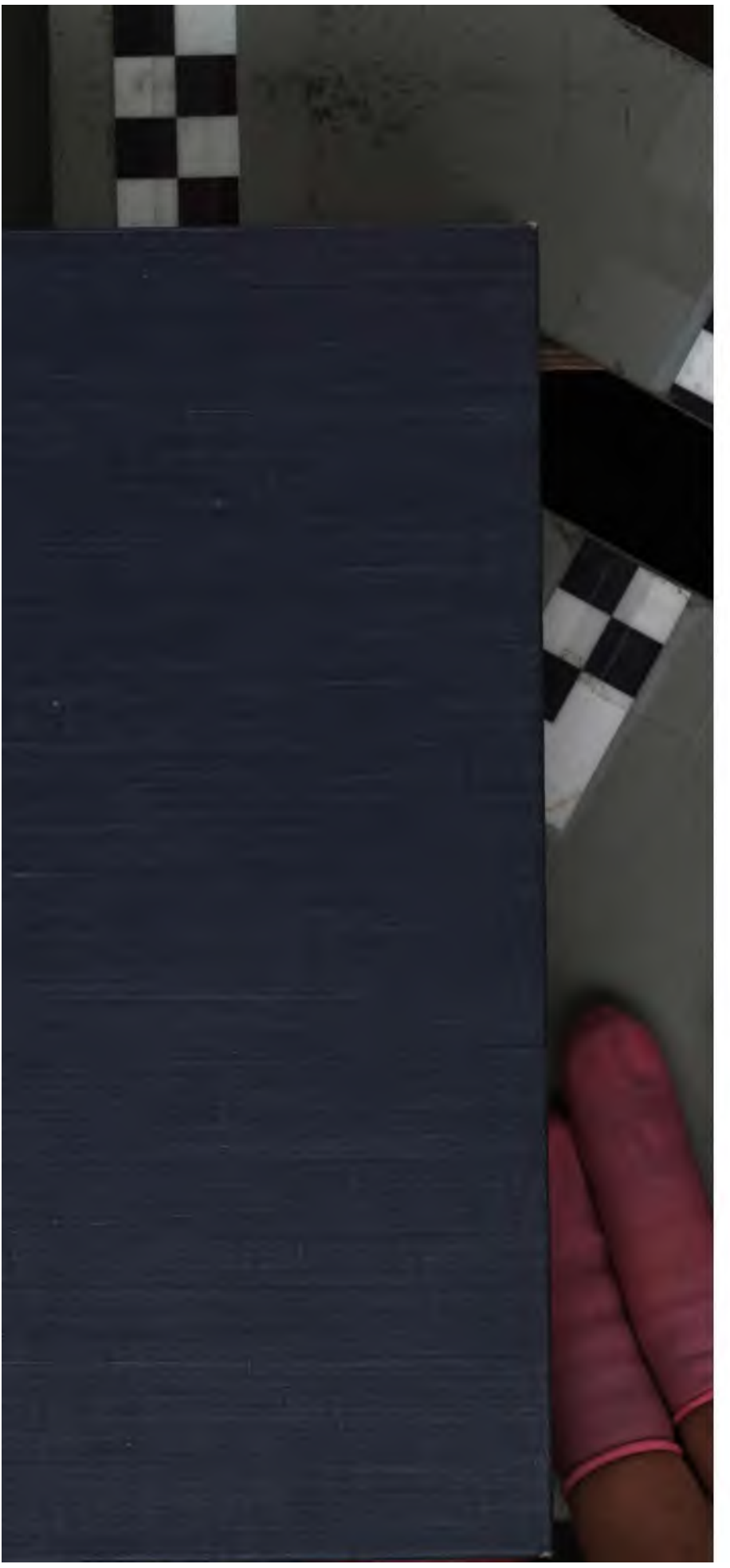

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THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

IN TWENTY-FOUR VOLUMES

LIMITED EDITION

LIMITED, FOR SALE IN AMERICA, TO ONE THOUSAND NUMBERED AND REGISTERED SETS, OF WHICH THIS IS NUMBER 316

The survivors, however, were present, and it was with me anybody pleasure that I recognised them in the stalls of the boxes. — Page 127.

THE WORKS OF

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

VOLUME SIXTEEN

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRAST
Department of French, Harvard University

A HISTORY OF ROMANTICISM

THE PROGRESS OF FRENCH POETRY SINCE MDCCCXXX

With an Introduction by the Editor

NEW YORK · Published for Subscribers only
by GEORGE D. SPROUL · *MD CCCC II*

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Introduction

A HISTORY OF ROMANTICISM

Introduction

ONE of the earliest, and one of the most interesting and entertaining monuments of French literature is Villehardouin's "Conquest of Constantinople." It is a simple and straightforward account of an expedition in which the writer, a typical feudal lord and knight of old, took a prominent part and won for himself fame as a warrior and a diplomatist, and later, and wholly without literary ambition, renown as a writer. The charm of that old work lies in the simplicity and artlessness of the style, in the evident pleasure the writer takes in recalling the great deeds and daring enterprises in which he was personally engaged. It is the individuality of the man, the exposition of his character and his motives and hopes, the absolutely frank and

candid statement of his views and feelings, his brilliant, because natural, description of the battles he has fought in, of the surprises and stratagems he has devised or had devised against him, of his daily life, of his cherished ideals, in a word, that even now attract and retain the reader's attention. He is so firmly convinced of the right of his cause, so sure that God is on his side and that of his comrades, so convinced that the foe must always be in the wrong, that it is simply delightful to accompany him on a crusade so singularly diverted from its original purpose.

Théophile Gautier's "History of Romanticism" possesses the same charm; is full of the same interest. Doubtless many nowadays will refuse to indorse his enthusiastic praise of the Romanticist movement and his laudation of the men who led it and who fought its battles, but no one can refuse to admire the loyalty of the writer to ideals and doctrines that he worshipped in youth, and which, in his old age, still appeal as strongly to him as they did in the happy times of yore "when all the world was young," with the fresh blood of Romanticism flowing through its veins.

It is probably quite impossible for any one born after the period when the influence of the movement was

still strongly felt, although already the Realistic school had displaced it as a powerful factor, to realise how deep was the hold it had upon men. The fascination it had exercised upon the fathers was felt by the sons, in a less degree, no doubt, but yet so strongly that it coloured their views of life and dictated their admirations. Hugo was the supreme master, and his dramas the most perfect and the most wonderful plays that had ever been written, Shakespeare's not excepted. Alfred de Musset's poems were on the tongues of all the youth of that day, and not one of them but knew his "Namouna" and his "Rolla" by heart. Imagination ran riot, and passion was the greatest thing on earth. The notion of beauty was not the calm and superb one taught by the Greek, but the more restless, more varied notion of the mediævalist, interpreted by his modern admirer. Classicists were no longer insulted, it is true, but the works of Racine were considered inferior to those of the recent poets. There was one faith — Romanticism; and one apostle and high-priest of that faith — Victor Hugo.

Now that being the case some twenty years or more after the memorable performance of "Hernani," which unquestionably marks an epoch in French literature, —

though it was not, as fondly fancied by Théophile Gautier, as great an event as the first performance of the "Cid," — it is not to be wondered at that the contemporaries of Victor Hugo, the young fellows who were inspired by him, the comrades who aided in securing the ultimate triumph of his much discussed play, should have been carried away by an enthusiasm that strikes the calm looker-on of the present time as exaggerated and even absurd. There was absurdity in it, to a certain extent, and no one recognises the fact more readily than Gautier himself in this very volume, but the mainspring of that enthusiasm, as is also set forth in the present work, was absolute and genuine love of art in all its forms, and the resolve to do or die for that art and the triumph of the ideas it represented.

It is not, then, a philosophical, a critical history of the great movement that is to be looked for in Gautier's pages, but something akin, in its way, to the old warrior's simple tale of his expedition. Gautier relates the conquest of the French mind by the Romanticist phalanx, and in the telling his own prejudices and prepossessions manifest themselves artlessly. He feels an amount of admiration for some of these long forgotten heroes of 1830 that the modern reader finds himself un-

able to share, and even, at times, to understand. Who, for instance, that has ever conscientiously waded through some of Petrus Borel's productions, can but wonder that Gautier should find so much in him, or that he should have been looked upon as one of the glories of the new school? Philothée O'Neddy is no longer a name to conjure with, and even Gérard de Nerval is not much read now. Men have arisen since those days whose works appeal, far more directly and far more effectively to the modern mind than those supposed masterpieces, doomed to early forgetfulness. The whole tone has changed. The erratic flights of fancy that delighted the Romanticists and their admiring readers pall upon the modern mind athirst for the real and the accurate. The French public itself has returned to the psychologists and the analysts, and is inclined to leave the idealists severely alone.

The title of the book might well have been more modest, perhaps, though there is no trace of conceit in Gautier. It might have been called Memoirs or Reminiscences, and indeed the latter would have described it most aptly, for it is the past that Gautier is evoking, with its memories of battle and victory, of struggle and temporary defeat, of magnificent success

and intoxicating praises sung by an applauding multitude. It is also the tale of true friendship and hearty comradeship; of enthusiastic collaboration and generous self-effacement for the sake of the master or of a beloved fellow-worker. It is a pæan in honour of the school that endowed France with a new poetry, a new form of painting, a new sense of nature, and recalled to its literature and to its art, as well as to the daily life of the people, a keener sense of the beautiful and a more tolerant notion of the differences in taste.

It is a pathetic story, on the whole, not only because it tells of a splendid dawn and a glorious noonday, soon followed by a sombre crepuscule, but also because it is told mostly of the dead. Gautier might have quoted Goethe, whom he admires so much and with such good reason: —

> "But, ah! they cannot hear my closing song
> For whom its earlier notes were tried.
> Departed is, alas! the friendly throng,
> And dumb the echoes all that once replied!"

for nearly all those with whom he had consorted in those never to be forgotten days had passed away into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. One by one he had seen them go; one by one he had followed them to

their last resting-place, and in the columns of his paper he had told of the talents and of the genius of one after another. The loneliness of old age was coming upon him; the solitude of the man who has outlived most of his contemporaries was beginning to enshroud him; the approach of his own end was unconsciously making itself felt and lent to his accents greater tenderness and depth. Standing, though he was not aware of it, upon the very threshold of the tomb, the remembrances of that hot youth of art and battle crowded thick and fast into his memory. He was again a student in Rioult's studio; again he was receiving from the hands of Gérard de Nerval the magic square of red cardboard that was to admit him to the long expected first performance of "Hernani;" again he was in that theatre crammed with friends and foes, ready to hiss or to applaud, and he, a striking figure in his brilliant costume, the memorable costume, was leading the hurricane of cheers that greeted every passage, and drowned in its roar the fierce execrations of the adversaries.

The accounts Gautier has given in this book are full of these reminiscences. The first performance of "Hernani" is the one shining mark in his life. It was the evening that settled his fate, the occasion on

which he definitely threw in his lot with the innovators; and although more than forty years had passed since that night, his enthusiasm was in no wise abated and his delight in the play was wholly undiminished.

It was therefore quite in accordance with the doctrines and the practice of that dramatic school to which he belonged, and of which he was one of the chiefest ornaments, that the last words he ever penned should have been about "Hernani," and that the old happiness should have returned to him at the very moment when his busy hand and fertile brain were stilled by death.

He had devoted himself to art, with such complete devotion that it has actually been made a reproach to him by some who cannot understand the circumstances under which Gautier became a Romanticist, and who fail to grasp the simple fact that the doctrine of art for art's sake was a necessary consequence of the sad condition into which such matters had fallen at that time. Faithful to art all his days, he found, as he says himself, that it was ever faithful to him and gave him a happiness he sought for elsewhere in vain.

Very touching too is the more than friendly feeling he has preserved towards all those who were comrades of his in the bygone days, all those who fought side by

side with him, who shared in the joys and in the troubles of the time, who were happy or wretched, but who were devoted like himself to the ideals set up by the master and accepted by the ardent disciples. Modest in all that regards himself, he is generous in his praise of his fellow-workers, and the friends of the survivors of whom he spoke in such tender terms must have been grateful indeed to him for the tributes he so willingly and lovingly laid on the new-made graves. There is a recurrence of the old friendly comradeship on every page of the work, and this lends to it a special value, beyond the interest it possesses as a memorial of a brilliant time and a tumultuous one, too, when such deep changes were being introduced not into French literature only, but into every form and manifestation of the artistic instinct and artistic powers of the nation.

The various portions of the volume were published at different times and in different papers. The first three chapters appeared in the *Bien public* of March 3, 10, and 17, 1872, and the chapter on "Hernani," left unfinished, was published in the same paper on November 6 of the same year. The various sketches of Romanticist celebrities, which are all connected with the history of the movement, were written for different

papers and at different dates between 1849 and 1870, while the study on the Progress of French Poetry since 1830 formed part of the Report on the Progress of Letters in France, to which Sylvestre de Sacy, Paul Féval, and Édouard Thierry also contributed. This portion was republished in 1874, under its present title, in the volume on the History of Romanticism.

A History of Romanticism

A HISTORY OF ROMANTICISM

I

THE FIRST MEETING

THERE are but a few veterans left of the men who, in answer to the call of Hernani's horn, followed him up the steep slopes of Romanticism and so valiantly defended the defiles against the attacks of the Classicists; and even these are disappearing day by day like the wearers of the Saint Helena medal. I had the honour of being enrolled in those youthful bands that fought for idealism, poesy, and freedom in art, with an enthusiasm, a bravery, and a devotion unknown nowadays. The glorious leader still stands like a statue upon its bronze pedestal, but the remembrance of the private soldiers will ere long be lost, and it is the duty

time. A movement analo
sance was taking place. A
hotly; everything was gen
at one and the same time;
air, which itself went to t
with lyrism and art. It s
lost secret had been foun
Poetry had been lost and no

It is impossible to realise
and colourlessness literatur
case of painting was no be
were engaged in smearing
old Græco-Roman stock
professed admiration for th
not repress a yawn as they
they did not, on that accoun
more tolerant of the artists
they called "tattooed savage
with "a drunken broom."

while both sides entertained the most profound contempt for each other.

At that time my literary vocation had not asserted itself, and I should have been greatly surprised had any one told me I would become a journalist, for such a prospect would have had little attraction for me. I intended to be a painter, and, with this purpose in view, I had entered Rioult's studio, situated near the Protestant church in the Rue Saint-Antoine, and which its nearness to the Collège Charlemagne, where I was completing my education, made me prefer on account of the facility with which I could combine studio and school work. I have often since then regretted that I did not follow my first impulse.

A man sees for himself how much he has accomplished, and reality, ever severe, impresses upon him what is his exact value; but he may dream of how much more beautiful, grander, and magnificent work he might have been the author, for if the page has been written all over, the canvas has remained spotlessly white, and there is nothing to prevent one from supposing, like Frenhofer in Balzac's "The Unknown Masterpiece," that there shines upon it a Venus by the side of whom Titian's nude women would be but shapeless daubs.

It is an innocent illusion, a secret subterfuge of self-love which harms no one and is always a bit consoling, for it is ever comforting to say to one's self, when the brush has been discarded in favour of the pen, "What a great painter I should have made!" I can only hope that my readers will not share that opinion and wish that I had stuck to my original purpose.

Men read a great deal in the studios of that day. The students were fond of literature, and their special training leading them to close communion with nature, they were better fitted to appreciate the images and the rich colouring of the new poesy. They had not the least objection to the exact and picturesque details that were so repugnant to the Classicists, for accustomed to their own free speech, full of technical expressions, the crude word in nowise shocked them. I speak of the young and enthusiastic students, for of course there were docile grinds, faithful to Chompré's Dictionary and to the tendon of Achilles, who were well thought of by the professor and held up by him as examples to be followed; but they were not in the least popular, and glances of contempt were cast upon their palettes, on which glowed neither Veronese green, Indian yellow,

Smyrna lake, nor any of the seditious colours proscribed by the Institute.

Chateaubriand may be looked upon as the ancestor, or, if you prefer it, the Sachem of French Romanticism. In the "Genius of Christianity" he restored Gothic art; in "The Natchez" he opened up Nature, so long closed to art; in "René" he invented melancholy and modern passion. Unfortunately, his most poetic mind lacked the wings of poetry — verse. Victor Hugo did have these wings, and of vast spread of pinion, too, stretching from one end to the other of the lyrical heavens. He rose, soared, circled, and swept about with a freedom and a power that recalled the eagle's flight.

What a wonderful time that was! Walter Scott was then enjoying the full tide of success; men were studying the mysteries of Goethe's "Faust," which, to use Mme. de Staël's words, contains everything and even something more than that; Shakespeare was being discovered under the somewhat revised translation by Letourneur; and Lord Byron's poems, "The Corsair," "Lara," "The Giaour," "Manfred," "Beppo," "Don Juan," brought the East, not yet become commonplace, to us. It was all so youthful, so new, so richly

coloured, and of so strange and intoxicating a savour, that it turned our heads and we seemed to be entering into unknown worlds. On every page we came upon subjects for pictures which we made haste to sketch stealthily, for they were not to our master's taste, and would have earned for us, had they been seen, a smart rap of the mahl-stick over the head.

It was in this state of mind that I worked at the figure, while reciting to my neighbour at the easel "King John's Joust," or "The Burgrave's Hunt." My heart was with the Romanticist school, although I was not yet affiliated to it. The preface to "Cromwell" blazed before me like the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinai, and the arguments it contained appeared to me unanswerable. The insults hurled by the inferior papers of the Classicist press against the youthful master whom I even then, and rightly, looked upon as the greatest poet in France, filled me with fiercest rage. I burned to go forth to fight the hydra of old fogyism, like the German painters with Cornelius at their head, mounted on Pegasus, after the fashion of the four sons of Aymon in the fresco by Kaulbach, in the new Pinacothek in Munich. I

should, however, have preferred a less classical steed, Ariosto's hippogriff, for instance.

The rehearsals of "Hernani" were going on, and judging by the excitement already aroused by the play, it was easy to foresee that the first performances would be riotous. My dearest wish, my highest ambition was to be present at the battle, to fight unseen in some corner for the good cause; but the tickets were reported to be at the author's disposal, at least for the first three performances, and the idea of asking him for one struck me, an unknown student in a painter's studio, as altogether beyond the bounds of audacity.

Happily, Gérard de Nerval, with whom I had formed at the Collège Charlemagne one of those youthful friendships that are ended by death alone, happened to pay me one of the brief, unexpected calls he was in the habit of making, in the course of which, like a tame swallow entering by the window, he would flutter round the room, uttering little cries, and soon bolt out again; for his lightsome, winged nature, apparently borne up by the breezes, like Euphorion, the son of Helen and Faust, plainly suffered if obliged to remain still, and the best way to have a chat with him was to accompany him on his walk. At this time

he was already an important personage; fame had come to him while still in college. At seventeen he had had a volume of verse published, and on reading the translation of "Faust" made by that youth who was scarce more than a lad, the great man of Weimar had deigned to say that he had never so well understood his own work. Gérard was acquainted with Victor Hugo, was received at his house, and deservedly enjoyed the Master's confidence, for never was there a more refined, more devoted or more loyal man.

Gérard was charged with the duty of recruiting young fellows for that first evening's performance, which promised to be stormy, and was already arousing so much animosity. Was it not natural that youth should be opposed to old age, the long-haired heads to the bald ones, enthusiasm to routine, the future to the past?

He carried in his pockets, stuffed with more books, old volumes, pamphlets, and note-books — for he wrote as he walked — than were those of Colline in "Life in Bohemia," a lot of small squares of red paper stamped with a mysterious signature: a Spanish word, *Hierro*, which means "iron," inscribed on one corner. This motto, the Castilian haughtiness of which was un-

commonly well suited to Hernani's character, and which he might have borne, meant also that in the fight one must be frank, brave, and reliable as a sword.

I do not think I ever in the whole course of my life experienced such lively joy as when Gérard, taking from the package six of these red paper squares, handed them to me with a solemn air, urging me at the same time to bring trusted men only. I answered on my life for the small group, for the squad the command of which was given to me.

Among my fellow-students in the studio, were two ferocious Romanticists who would willingly have fed upon the body of a member of the Academy, and among my classmates at the Collège Charlemagne two young poets who were secretly cultivating rich rimes, exact expressions, and accurate metaphors, terrified the while lest these misdeeds should cause them to be disinherited by their parents. These four I enrolled, after exacting from them an oath to give no quarter to the Philistines; a cousin of mine completed the number of our little band, which, I need not say, behaved valiantly.

It is not, however, my intention to relate now the great battle round which a legend has already been

formed. It shall have a chapter to itself. I am of opinion that the frontispiece of this History of Romanticism, begun somewhat in chance fashion, for I have been led to recall these unforgettable memories by the revival of "Ruy Blas" (at the Odéon Theatre, February 19, 1872), should be the radiant figure of him, then quite young, to whom I said, as did Dante to Vergil, "Thou art my Master and my author," — with the features and the mien of those bygone days.

My "Hernani" record, thirty campaigns, thirty stormy performances, almost gave me the right to be presented to the great leader. It could easily be managed: Gérard de Nerval or Petrus Borel, whose acquaintance I had recently made, would either of them readily take me to the house, but at the thought I was filled with overpowering timidity, and dreaded the fulfilment of a wish so long caressed. When anything happened to prevent the meetings arranged with Gérard or Petrus, or both of them, for the purpose of presenting me, I felt renewed comfort, as if relieved of a burden, and I breathed freely again.

Victor Hugo had been compelled, owing to the number of visitors consequent on the performances of

"Hernani," to leave the peaceful retreat he dwelt in, at the back of a garden full of trees, in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, and had settled in a projected new street in the Francis I quarter, the Rue Jean-Goujon, which at that time had but one house, that occupied by the poet. All around stretched the almost desert Champs-Élysées, a solitude favourable to wanderings and meditations.

Twice I ascended the stairs slowly, — oh! so slowly, as if my boots had been soled with lead. I could not breathe, and I could hear my heart thumping in my breast, while a cold sweat came out on my temples. On reaching the door, and as I was about to pull the bell, I was seized with panicky terror. I turned round and bolted down the stairs four steps at a time, pursued by my acolytes, who were laughing fit to split their sides.

The third attempt was more successful. I had begged my companions to give me time to recover, and I had sat down upon the steps, for my legs were giving way and refused to bear my weight, when suddenly the door opened and in a blaze of light, like Phœbus and Apollo issuing from the gates of Dawn, there appeared on the dark landing Victor Hugo himself in all his glory!

Like Esther before Ahasuerus, I nearly fainted. Hugo could not extend towards me, as did the satrap to the lovely Jewess, his long golden sceptre, for the very good reason that he had no golden sceptre, whereat I wondered. He smiled, but did not seem surprised, accustomed as he was to meeting daily, as he took his walks abroad, poets in a fainting state, artist students blushing crimson or pale as death, and even grown men who remained speechless or able only to stammer a few words. With the most exquisite courtesy, he made me rise, and giving up his walk showed us the way into his study.

Heinrich Heine relates that intending to call upon the great Goethe, he had long rehearsed in his own mind the fine speeches he proposed to speak to him, but that once he was introduced into his presence the only thing that occurred to him was to say: "The plum trees on the road from Iena to Weimar bear plums that are excellent for the quenching of the thirst." Whereat the Jupiter-Mansuetus of German poetry had gently smiled, more flattered perhaps by this crazy piece of nonsense than he would have been by a set, coldly turned eulogy. My own eloquence did not reach beyond the bounds of dumbness, although I too had

often rehearsed, during long evenings, the lyrical apostrophes with which I had meant to greet Victor Hugo when I should meet him for the first time.

After I had somewhat recovered myself, I was able to take part in the conversation begun between Hugo, Gérard, and Petrus. Gods, kings, pretty women and great poets may be stared at more freely than other people without their being annoyed at it, and I examined Hugo with an intense admiration that did not appear to be unpleasant to him. He recognised the painter's glance taking notes in order to fix for ever a look, an appearance, a moment he desires not to forget.

In the Romanticist host as in the Army of Italy there were none but youths. Most of the privates were not even of age, and the oldest of the band was the commander-in-chief himself, then twenty-eight years old, which was the age of Bonaparte, and also that of Hugo when I met him.

I have written somewhere: "It is rare that a poet or an artist is known under his first and attractive aspect. Fame comes to him late, when already the fatigue of life, the long struggles and the tortures of passion have changed his original mien. It is a worn, withered mask he leaves behind him, marked by every

grief he has endured with a wound or a wrinkle as with stigmata. It is this last image of him, which has its own special beauty, that men remember." I have been fortunate enough to be acquainted with all the poets of the modern Pleiades, whose early looks are now forgot, in all the bloom of their youth, their beauty, and their charm.

What first struck one in Victor Hugo was the truly monumental brow that crowned his serious, placid face like a pediment of white marble. It had not, it is true, the proportions given it later by David d'Angers and other artists, with the object of accentuating in the poet's face the marks of genius, but it really was of superhuman beauty and breadth. The mightiest thoughts might be written upon it, and wreaths of gold and laurel rest upon it as upon the brow of a god or of a Cæsar. It bore the sign of power. It was framed in by somewhat long light brown hair. Hugo wore neither beard, mustaches, whiskers, nor tuft on the lower lip; his face, remarkably pale, was clean shaved. It was marked and illumined by two tawny eyes like the eyes of an eagle; the lips were sinuous, with arching corners, and firm and wilful in outline. When opened by a smile, they allowed dazzlingly white teeth to show. His

dress consisted of a black frock-coat, gray trousers, and a turned-down shirt-collar, a get-up at once most simple and correct. Indeed no one would have suspected this thorough gentleman of being the leader of the hairy, bearded bands that were the terror of the smooth-chinned bourgeois.

In this wise did Victor Hugo appear unto me at our first meeting, and his image has remained ineffaceable in my memory. I carefully preserve that handsome, youthful, smiling portrait of him, radiant with genius and surrounded with a halo of glory.

II

THE INNER CIRCLE

NOW that you have been presented with due ceremony to the chief of the school, who has received you with his usual graciousness and affability, would you like to meet a group of the disciples, every one filled with the most perfervid enthusiasm? Only, if you happen to admire Racine more than Shakespeare and Calderon, you had better keep the fact to yourself, for tolerance is not accounted a virtue by neophytes.

In a small room with not enough chairs for the guests, met a number of young fellows who were really young, and so far different from the younger men of to-day, who are all more or less over fifty. The hammock in which the owner of the place enjoyed his siesta, and the narrow couch on which dawn often surprised him as he reached the last page of a volume of verse, partially made up for the lack of seating facilities. The guests spoke more comfortably standing, and the

gestures of the orators or reciters gained in breadth. Of course it would not do to throw out the arm too far, or one would strike the sloping ceiling.

The room was poor, but its poverty was proud and not devoid of adornments. A multiple frame of varnished pine contained sketches by Eugène and Achille Devéria; near this frame a gilded one set off a head painted by Louis Boulanger after an original by Titian or Giorgione; it was painted on board, boldly, and was of splendid tone. On a portion of the wall a piece of Bohemian leather, which did not pretend to act the part of a hanging, displayed, for the delight of the painters, a ruddy shimmer of gold and changing tones in the dark corner.

The mantelpiece was adorned with two Rouen-ware jars, filled with flowers. A skull, that looked as if it might have been removed from the hand of one of Spagnoletto's Magdalens — so livid was the sunbeam that fell upon it — took the place of a clock. If it did not indicate the time, at least it made one reflect upon its irreparable flight. It was a translation into Romanticist verse of the symbolism of Horace's line.

The medallion portraits of the members, the work of Jehan du Seigneur — I beg you to note carefully the

"h," for it is characteristic of the times, — oiled in order to destroy the crude look of the plaster, to colour them, as smokers and sculptors say, were hung on either side of the mirror and in the window recess, where the light touched them in a way peculiarly favourable to the relief.

What has become of these medallions, the work of a hand now cold in death, from originals that have disappeared or few of whom, at least, still survive? No doubt these plaster portraits were broken in the rude handling consequent on the frequent moves in the course of the odysseys of adventurous lives, for at that time not one of us was rich enough to secure for that collection — that nowadays would be of such value, both as souvenirs and from the artistic point of view — such immortality as bronze bestows. But when endless youth opens up before one its boundless horizon, no one suspects that the present, one expends with such lavish hand, may some day be history, and thus many an interesting memento is lost by the wayside.

On a modest set of shelves of wild-cherry wood, hung by cords, shone, among a few choice volumes, a copy of "Cromwell," with a friendly dedication, signed V. H. The veneration of Protestants for the Bible,

or that of Mohammedans for the Koran did not surpass mine for that volume, which was indeed to me the book of books, the work that contained the true doctrine.

The assemblage generally comprised Gérard de Nerval, Jehan du Seigneur, Augustus MacKeat, Philothée O'Neddy (every man altered his name a bit in order to give it an air), Napoleon Tom, Joseph Bouchardy, Célestin Nanteuil; somewhat later, Théophile Gautier and a few more, and finally Petrus Borel himself. Of these young fellows, bound by the tenderest friendship, some were painters, others sculptors, others engravers, others architects or at least studying architecture. For myself, as I have already said, standing at the parting of the ways, I hesitated between the two paths, that is, between poetry and painting, both of them equally detested of parents.

Nevertheless, though I had not crossed the Rubicon, I was already making more verse than sketches; and it appeared to me to be pleasanter to paint with words than with colours. For one thing, when the sitting was over, one had not to clean up the palette and to wash one's brushes.

Nor was I the only one in the small company who suffered from uncertainty of vocation. Joseph Bou-

chardy, then unknown, was studying mezzotint engraving under the Englishman Reynolds, the engraver of the beautiful plate of Géricault's "The Wreck of the 'Medusa,'" but he felt himself irresistibly drawn towards the drama, and every one knows how fully success justified this imperious command of instinct. Bouchardy, "Saltpetre-heart," as Petrus called him in the preface to the "Rhapsodies," in which he has a word for every one of his comrades as he goes along, did not become a mezzotint engraver, though he studied the process thoroughly; he became the Shakespeare of the Boulevard, and one might say that in his works are to be met with the deep black tones of English engraving. Petrus was also seeking to find his proper career. From the architect's studio he had passed to that of Eugène Devéria, where he tried his hand at painting; but if I may use such a classical expression in a History of Romanticism, we suspected him even then of secretly courting the Muse. Gérard was the only man of letters among us, in the meaning the word had in the middle of the eighteenth century. He was subjective rather than objective; thought more of the idea than of the image; understood nature somewhat in the fashion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; in his relations with mankind, cared

but little for paintings and statues; and, spite of his constant relations with Germany and his intimacy with Goethe, had remained far more French than any of us, in all the characteristics of race, temperament, and mind.

This interpenetration of poetry by art was and is still one of the characteristic traits of the new school, and explains why its first adherents were recruited from the ranks of the artists rather than those of the men of letters. Innumerable objects, images, and comparisons believed inexpressible in words, entered into our language and have remained in it. The scope of literature was enlarged, and now within its mighty compass it embraces the whole sphere of art.

Such, then, was my state of mind at that time; art attracted me by the seductive forms it offered me for the realisation of my dream of beauty, while the ascendency of the Master drew me in his luminous wake, and made me forget that to be a great poet is more difficult still than to be a great painter.

The impassible Goethe experienced a similar indecision in his attempts and efforts to assimilate a new form of expression, and in his Venetian epigrams he wrote: "I have tried many things; I have drawn a great deal, I have engraved on copper and painted in

oils; I have often also modelled in clay, but I lacked perseverance and learned nothing, accomplished nothing. In one art only have I become almost a master, the art of writing in German; and thus it comes about that, unfortunate poet, I am wasting life and art upon the most rebellious matter. What had fate meant to make of me? It is a rash question, for generally it does not intend to make much of most men. Was it a poet? It would have succeeded in doing so, had not our speech proved so utterly rebellious."

May I also, after so many years of labour and of researches in various directions, have become almost a master in one single art, that of writing in French! But such ambitions are forbidden me.

In every group there is a central individuality, round which the others cluster and gravitate like a planetary system around its sun. Petrus Borel was our sun; none of us sought to escape his attraction; as soon as a man had been caught in the whirl, he went on revolving with singular satisfaction, as if he had been obeying a natural law. He felt something of the intoxication of the whirling dervish spinning in the centre of his fustanella, that the rapidity of his waltzing causes to expand like a bell.

He was rather older than I, some three or four years older, perhaps, of medium stature, well made, with an elegant figure, and meant to wear a brown mantle in the streets of Seville. Not that he resembled an Almaviva or a Lindor; on the contrary, he was grave as a Castilian, and seemed always as though he had just emerged from one of Velasquez' paintings. When he put on his hat he seemed to be covering himself in the presence of the King, like a grandee of Spain; his lofty courtesy set him apart, but he never wounded other people's feelings, for he stopped just at the point when courtesy would have become either coldness or impertinence.

His was a face never to be forgotten, once seen. Young and serious, perfectly regular, of olive complexion, with faint amber tones like an old master's painting acquiring an agate surface, it was lighted by great eyes, shining and sad, the eyes of an Abencerrage thinking of Granada. The best description that I can give of these eyes of his is that they were exotic or nostalgic. His bright red lips bloomed like a flower under his mustaches, and imparted a spark of life to features Oriental in their immobility.

A beard, fine, silky, full, scented with benzoin, and

cared for as a Sultan's beard might be, framed in a dark shadow his pale and handsome face. A beard! A very ordinary matter in France nowadays, but at that time there were but two in the country: Eugène Devéria's and Petrus Borel's. It required absolutely heroic self-possession and contempt of the multitude to wear one. And mark that when I say beard, I do not mean mutton-chop or fin-shaped whiskers, or a tip or a tuft, but a genuine, full, complete beard, one to make a man shudder.

I, beardless one, with but a light mustache on the corners of my upper lip, I admired that splendid crop of hair. I must even confess that I, who had never coveted anything, did feel the meanest jealousy of it, and that I did my best to counterbalance its effect by a Merovingian superabundance of hair on my head. Petrus wore his short, almost cropped, so as to make his beard more striking still; in this direction, therefore, I had the chance of hitting upon something new, singular, and even somewhat scandalous.

The presence of Petrus Borel produced an indefinable impression, the cause of which I managed at last to discover. He was not a contemporary; nothing in him reminded one of a modern man; he seemed

always to be emerging from the past, and one could have sworn he had just bidden good-by to his ancestors. I have not met with a similar expression in any one else. It was difficult to take him for a Frenchman born in the nineteenth century, but quite easy, on the other hand, to believe him a Spaniard, an Arab, or an Italian of the fifteenth.

Thanks to his beard, his powerful yet gentle voice, and his dress, picturesquely worn, without, however, being too different from the fashion of the day, and always tastefully kept to sombre colours, Petrus Borel inspired me with exceeding awe, and I treated him with an amount of respect quite unusual between young fellows nearly of an age. He talked well, in a strange and paradoxical way, used words deliberately odd, and delivered his remarks with a certain rough eloquence. He had not yet taken to baying at the moon, and to sickening people. I thought him "remarkably clever," and had concluded that he would be the particular great man of our company. He was slowly elaborating the "Rhapsodies" in mysterious secrecy, intending that they should suddenly blaze forth like the lightning, and blind, or at least dazzle, the astounded bourgeoisie.

Until the day of their publication should dawn, Petrus, who was the most thorough specimen of the Romanticist idealist, and who might have posed for one of Byron's heroes, used to promenade around, followed by his train, admired of all, proud of his genius and his beauty, one end of his cloak thrown over his shoulder, and casting behind him a shadow on which it would not have been the part of prudence to step. How many a time, at the performances of "Hernani," I regretted that Borel was not playing the part of the bandit beloved of Doña Sol; for he would have admirably represented the mountain hawk, the hero of the Sierras, struggling against fate; and handsome indeed would he have looked, wearing the cloak, the green-sleeved jerkin, the red breeches, and the sombrero pulled down over his eyes!

III

THE INNER CIRCLE

A STRANGE figure also was Joseph Bouchardy. He did not look as if he had been born in France, but rather on the banks of the Indus or the Ganges, so dark and tawny was he. I know not what mysterious sun had browned his face, and had concentrated all its rays upon him after breaking through the mists above. All he needed, to look like the Maharajah of Lahore, was a dress of white muslin, a Cashmere shawl twisted around his head by way of turban, and a diamond nose-ring. When he had on his blue coat with gilt buttons, and his black and white checked waistcoat and trousers, he seemed to be disguised, like the dispossessed princes of British India, who may be seen wandering with disconsolate air on the London pavements. His hair, of a blue black, produced greenish tints as it fell on his golden temples. His eyes, like jet stars, shone black on the yellow sclerotic, and his face was framed in with a

light, downy, silky, fine beard, every hair of which might have been counted as in a Hindoo miniature. He looked infinitely more like a disciple of Calidaça or of King Soudraka, the poet with the elephant ears, than an enthusiastic pupil of Victor Hugo. So we sometimes used to poke fun at him, when it was time to go, by saying: "Maharajah, your Highness' palanquin is waiting, and the bearers are jolly well bored."

He was short, thin, supple, with the action of a black Javanese panther; his somewhat small head turned freely upon a long neck carelessly wrapped round with a white foulard cravat.

His barbaric and fierce mien was purely picturesque, and did not betoken the least inward trace of savagery. Never did there beat in man's breast a warmer, more tender, or more unselfish heart than that of this young tiger of the jungle. Besides, every one of us, though at bottom the best of fellows, loved to look like grim rufflers, if only to instil wholesome fear in the breasts of the bourgeois.

Like every member of our society, Bouchardy knew every line of Hugo's play, and could have recited "Hernani" from beginning to end; a performance that

then surprised no one, for we often performed the play ourselves, each man taking one of the parts, and, by Saint John d'Avila, no prompter was needed! He was, however, less of a lyrist than the rest of us, who were absolutely crazy about poetry, and, provided we were satisfied with the style, cared little enough for the subject itself. Bouchardy was very much taken up with play-writing, drawing up plans of imaginary dramas, blocking out scenes, arranging settings, creating innumerable vicissitudes, involving his characters in apparently inextricable situations, setting himself the task of finding a way out of them, keeping back his effects for three acts so as to bring them on at the exact moment, cutting masked doors in walls for the entrance of the expected personage, aud trap-doors in the floors for his exits.

He wrought out in advance, as if it were one of Anne Radcliffe's castles, the curious edifice in which his heroes and heroines were later on to meet, to love, to hate, to fight, to trap each other, to commit murders, or to marry; providing it with a donjon, turrets, subterranean dungeons, secret passages, winding stairs, vaulted halls, hiding-places in the thick walls, mortuary vaults, and chapels in the crypts. We used to charge him

with turning his plays into wooden models, and he would laugh, saying that it might well be the best thing to do.

Bouchardy had the artless yet complex temperament that led the workmen of the Middle Ages to intertwine the inextricable "forests" of the cathedrals, and to enclose in the cases of clocks the world of wheels, weights, counter-weights, springs, and pendulums that caused the sun, moon and stars, angels, the seasons, and the four apostles to move, and that occasionally even showed the time. In the drama, in which he gave proof of unquestionable power, it was the structural difficulties that delighted him above all things. The very fact that the plot of a play was simple made him condemn it as defective, and he strove to cram each act full of incidents, vicissitudes, and complications. When the Gaieté gave "The Bell-ringer of Saint Paul's," one of the greatest, most durable, and most profitable successes of the Boulevard drama, I was already on the staff of the *Presse*, and it fell to me to perform the difficult task of describing Bouchardy's masterpiece.

After writing nine columns I had got half-way through the first act only; so, Bouchardy being a neighbour of

mine, I went to him in order to have him guide me through the maze of events. After a couple of hours spent in marches and counter-marches, he owned to being as much puzzled as myself, for he had not his plan of the play at hand. I am bound to say that the golden-skinned and indigo-haired monster smiled with a certain amount of pride, and appeared to be flattered by the thought that a man might lose himself in his work just as in the catacombs, and seek in vain in the darkness for any exit. It would have afforded him much satisfaction to see me starve to death in it, but I refused to give him that pleasure, and returned to the light of day by breaking through the opaque vault at the point I had reached.

A few years later, in Spain, at Jaën, a grim, African-looking town still enclosed in the remains of Moorish walls with saw-like crenelations, and hills as tawny as a lion's skin, and where a man never dreams of going to purchase a bundle of pimento on the public square without his navaja in his belt and a carbine on his shoulder, I saw on a wall, between the parador and the cathedral, a huge poster bearing these words: *El campanero de San Pablo por el illustrissimo señor Don José Bouchardy.* Bouchardy's fame had crossed not only the Pyrenees,

but the Sierra Morena likewise, the range of mountains wherein Don Quixote imitated the penance of Amadis upon the Rock of Poverty, and where Sancho found Cardenio's valise by the dead mule. Now that fame was romantically blazing in Jaën, after a classical performance of "Merope." At Valladolid, I had come upon "Hernani," translated by Don Eugenio de Ochoa, bearing himself as proudly there as on the stage of the Rue Richelieu. The pupil was marching on before the master upon the roads of Spain, like a herald-at-arms.

At this time Bouchardy would never have dreamed of such success; he was still engraving in mezzotint under Reynolds. Save Gérard de Nerval, not one of us had made a name, but we felt as if borne by the wind towards a brilliant future. The only reproach we addressed to the coming author of "Gaspardo the Fisherman," "The Bell-ringer of Saint Paul's," "Christopher the Swede," "Longsword," and "Paris the Comedian," was that he did not write in verse, and indeed, that he did not write, properly speaking. Wholly devoted to dramatic combinations, he neglected his style, a rare occurrence in the Romanticist school, although many Classicists charged it with being ignorant of French.

THE INNER CIRCLE

Sculpture is assuredly of all the arts that one which lends itself least readily to the expression of the Romanticist idea. It seems to have received its final form from antiquity. Having been developed under an anthropomorphous religion, in which beauty deified was made immortal in marble and rose upon the altars, it attained a perfection that can never be surpassed. Never has the hymn of the human form been sung in nobler strophes; the splendid force of form shone with incomparable brilliancy during that period of Greek civilisation, the youth and springtime of human genius.

What can sculpture accomplish without the gods and heroes of mythology, which afford it, with plausible pretexts, the nude forms and the draperies which it needs, and which Romanticism proscribes, or at least did proscribe in those days of early fervour? Every sculptor is necessarily a Classicist; at bottom he always belongs to the religion of the Olympians, and cannot read without deep emotion Heinrich Heine's "Gods in Exile." I myself, thanks to my studies in plastics, cannot help regretting the ambrosial-haired Zeus relegated to the Isle of Pines in the Northern Ocean, Aphrodite imprisoned within the Venusberg, Ampelos

cellarer to a monastery, and Herakles bank-clerk in Hamburg.

Nevertheless, we did not lack sculptors who sought to introduce truth into idealism, and to get closer to the beauty of nature. David d'Angers, sung by Victor Hugo and Sainte-Beuve in admirable poems, produced his "Maiden at Botzaris' Tomb," his "Philopœmen," and his great monumental busts, as well as that most characteristic collection of medallions which forms, as it were, a complete iconography of the age. Antonin Moine, Préault, Maindron, Mlle. de Fauveau were one and all endeavouring to break the old moulds and to communicate to the clay or the wax the suppleness of life and the thrill of passion. In our own cænaculum, Jehan du Seigneur represented that austere art which will not yield to fancy, because, feeling itself looked at under every one of its aspects, it may not scamp or conceal anything. Honesty in sculpture has always been obligatory, and Jehan du Seigneur, so accurate, so conscientious, was not the man to fail in this respect.

Jehan du Seigneur — let me keep in his name Jean the mediæval "h" which made him so happy and led him to fancy that he wore the apron of Ervinus of

Steinbach, working at the carvings on the Strasburg minster — Jehan du Seigneur was a young fellow some twenty years of age; he certainly had barely attained his majority. He had a gentle look, modest and shy as a maiden's; he was short, but robust, as is generally the case with sculptors who are accustomed to struggle with matter. His dark-brown hair was parted on either side and dressed to a point above his forehead, like a flame that crowns genius, or the top-knot so characteristic of Louis-Philippe. This mode of dressing the hair, which would appear strange to-day, outlined a handsome white brow, glowing with light, and under it shone two velvety black eyes, bathed in the blue fluid of childhood and incomparably sweet. Light mustaches and a light tuft on the chin gave strength to the features, and the somewhat protruding lower jaw indicated tenacity of purpose. Du Seigneur himself, however, grieved unremittingly over the wondrous bloom of his complexion, which was literally of lilies and roses, according to the ancient classical formula.

At that time it was the fashion, in the Romanticist school, for a man to be wan, livid, greenish, and somewhat cadaverous, if possible, for thus did one attain

the fateful, Byronic, Giaour look of one devoured by passion and remorse. Tender-hearted women thought such a one interesting, and, feeling grieved at his approaching fate, abridged the time of waiting for the consummation of happiness in order that he might taste it while still in this world. But rosy health illumined his sweet and lovely face. It is not every one who can have the mien of a Ruthven.

In order to carry out the programme contained in his name, Jehan du Seigneur wore, instead of a waistcoat, a slashed doublet of black velvet, cut to a point, fitting closely and laced behind. It was no more ridiculous, after all, than the waistcoats cut open in heart shape down to the pit of the stomach, and fastened by a single button, that were recently the fashion. A jacket with broad velvet facings, and a very full cravat of taffeta, with a great bow, completed this carefully thought out costume, in which, as the very acme of Romanticist elegance, not a trace of linen was visible. The men of fifty of to-day, and even some who are older, may remember the jokes directed against the shirt-collar as symbolical of the grocer, the bourgeois, the Philistine, who, with their ears scraped by the triangle of starched linen, seemed to be them-

selves bringing their decapitated heads like bouquets done up in paper.

It took all Victor Hugo's Olympic majesty and the shudders of terror he inspired to carry off his small turned-down collar — a concession to Mrs. Grundy — and when the doors were closed, and no profane ones were present, this weakness of the great genius, which connected him with humanity and even with the bourgeoisie, was commented on sadly, and deep sighs welled up from our artistic breasts.

Meanwhile Jehan du Seigneur, instead of attempting a "Hercules on Mount Œta," was at work upon an "Orlando furioso" trying to break his bonds, a group of "Esmeralda giving water to Quasimodo," and a bust of Victor, as we called him among ourselves with that tender familiarity that disciples indulge in; while I, an apprentice poet, addressed to the young sculptor, already a master, the following, among many more verses which I shall not inflict upon the reader: —

"Then before the eyes of thine entranced soul, shimmering with gilt, vaporous in gauze, Such as thy heart sought her in Hugo's work, With her long hair wind-blown and curled, Slender-limbed, quick-footed, wasp-waisted, A true dream of the East, did Esmeralda pass.

"Roland the brave knight, who, with frothing lips, His brows bent, rolls his grim and fierce eyes, And on the sharp rocks he has uprooted, Naked, mad with love, his nostrils inflamed, Brings out the great bones of his mighty chest, And writhes with his enthralled limbs.

"Then the Homeric, Napoleonic head of Victor, our King! Nay, more: mine own, My Gérard's and Petrus Borel's too, And others that with swift finger, as thou goest, Thou makest live in wax or eke in clay — Enough, in times of old, to make man immortal!"

IV

THE MIRACULOUS COMRADE

JULES VABRE owes his fame to the announcement, on the cover of Petrus Borel's "Rhapsodies," of his "Essay on the Incommodiousness of Commodes," a work that never saw the light and may be included in catalogues of oddities with "The Poor Sapper," and Ernest Reyer's treatise "On the Influence of Fishes' tails upon the Undulations of the Sea." Nor has the following stanza of the odelet, addressed to him by Petrus, in these same "Rhapsodies" been forgotten: —

"Now in good sooth, Jules Vabre, Comrade miraculous,
To the gaze fastidious Of the clean shaven bourgeois, Must
we not crazy seem, In this world in which all men proper
are! Must we not seem passing strange As our own sweet
wills we follow?"

The truth is Jules Vabre might well have amazed bearded men even, had men worn beards in those days, for he was one of the most eccentric persons I can

remember. He did not sport his Romanticism like a plume, and did not affect any of the truculent airs so much in vogue in the school; his fair hair, already somewhat thinned on the forehead, was not very long, nor did his mustaches hang down upon his breast like those of the ancient Breton warriors, but his gray eyes sparkled with mischief, and innumerable little ironical wrinkles played at the corners of his lips, the sides of his nostrils, and the outer corners of his eyes. He often laughed to himself, like Chingachgook, the Mohican, at the comedies that went on in his brain, and when he spoke, one could see a procession of fatidical figures, making faces and cutting capers, bursting with laughter, putting out their tongues, and suddenly vanishing like Chinese shadow-pictures. A talk with him gave one exactly the same impression as glancing through Rabelais' "Comical Visions" does. It was absolutely crazy and deeply true, and his extravagant fantocchi lived the most intense life, now comical, now sorrowful.

He was a Romanticist, but a Rabelaisian also, and in the prescribed mingling of the grotesque and the serious, he was always inclined to make the former predominate. In the most serious and innocent way

he indulged in the wildest practical jokes and fooled the bourgeois with the coolness of Panurge. He also recalled Merckle, whom Goethe considered the most perfect type of Mephistopheles.

But what was the occupation of Jules Vabre, who has long since vanished, and has left no other trace of his passage here below than an ironical announcement of a book and his own name in a dedication? Was he poet, painter, sculptor, or composer? I do not know a single line of verse, a single picture, a single statue, a single sonata by him. He was an architect; there were many of them in the "Hernani" host, as sick of the five orders as I was of the three unities. When their ship was overdue, Vabre and his friend Petrus became clerks of works under some contractor, and settled themselves in the first fairly finished room, both to save rent and to enjoy playing at Robinson Crusoe in the very midst of civilisation.

Thus it was that I came upon them in a half-ruinous cellar in the Rue Fontaine-au-Roi, which, I suppose, they had undertaken to repair. The yard was filled with rubbish, consisting of beams, bricks, and stones, that greatly impeded my approach. Stumbling

over the stones and timber, I at last managed to reach the dwelling of my friends, guided by the occasional gleams of light that issued from the air-holes of the cellar. To them the place was a regular grotto in the island of San Juan Fernandez, and not by any means a cellar in the Rue Fontaine-au-Roi. I descended a few steps and beheld Petrus, pale and haughty, prouder than a Castilian noble, seated by a fire made of boards, while Vabre, kneeling and supporting himself with his hands, his cheeks swollen like those of classical Æolus, was blowing up the fire, thus producing the intermittence of light visible from outside. The group so formed, lighted as it was from below, and casting strong shadows, quaintly deformed by the arch of the vaulting, would have furnished Rembrandt, or even Norblin, had Rembrandt been too busy just then, with a subject for an effectively mysterious etching.

Under the ashes was cooking the supper of my two friends, whose sobriety surpassed that of hermits; the supper consisted of potatoes. "On Sundays, we have salt with them," said Jules Vabre, with an air of proud sensuality; for, after all, salt, like Diogenes' wooden cup, is a luxury; simple palates do not need

that stimulant, and a man can drink perfectly well out of the hollow of his hand.

Water drawn from the pump washed down this primitively simple meal, and my two friends were so constituted that they experienced a certain satisfaction in reducing themselves to the barest necessaries of life. The fewer one's needs, the easier it is to escape from the trammels of civilisation; in their cellar, they felt as free as if they had been on a desert island. On a shutter placed upon trestles were laid out the drawings and working-plans of the job, a package of cigarette paper almost used up, with its engraving of smugglers and its Catalonian motto: *Upa, mynions, alere!* a tobacco-pouch made out of the webbed foot of some sea-bird, and whence escaped, as golden hairs out of a net, a few bits of Maryland tobacco, too few, alas! to furnish material for a last cigarette.

At that time I had not yet taken to smoking, but I was already aware that there is no greater privation for men in the habit of gargling themselves with tobacco, than the lack of the weed. I had therefore brought a package of Maryland in the hope that my friends' pride would not take offence at so insignificant an offering. They were just the sort of fellows who, with

empty stomachs, always reply, when invited to share a meal, that they have just risen from table after indulging in a splendid dinner. They had had no smoke since the night before, however, and Petrus, opening the package, drew out some of the tobacco, rolled it under his thumb, the colour of burnished gold, in the small leaf of *papel de hilo*, lighted it at the candle stuck in the neck of an empty bottle, and put it to his lips with an unmistakable expression of enjoyment such as rarely showed on his stoical countenance. His great eyes, half Spanish, half Arab, flashed for an instant, a faint blush coloured his olive skin, jets of smoke shot out alternately from his nostrils and his lips, and ere long he disappeared within the encircling cloud, like Jupiter, the cloud-compeller. Needless to say that meanwhile Jules Vabre, the miraculous comrade, was engaged in doing precisely the same thing.

Now my reader may well inquire by what tenuous thread the worthy Jules Vabre is connected with the history of Romanticism, since, though he was a charming fellow, he has but the slightest claim to literary fame, not having, as I myself have owned, finished, or, indeed, even begun the "Essay on the Incommo-

diousness of Commodes," designed to be a work of transcendental cabinet-making.

Well, Jules Vabre loved Shakespeare, — loved him with a love that was excessive, even in a Romanticist cænaculum. Shakespeare was his god, his idol, his master passion, a phenomenon he could never quite familiarise himself with, and which filled him with ever renewed surprise. He thought of him by day, and dreamed of him by night, and like La Fontaine, who used to ask passers-by, "Have you read Baruch?" Vabre would not have hesitated to stop a man in the street to inquire whether he had read Shakespeare. The architect was wholly engrossed in and possessed by the poet. Finding that he did not know English well enough, Jules Vabre, undismayed by the prospect of hunger and want, left Paris for London, his sole object being to acquaint himself so thoroughly with his author's tongue that no fine shade of meaning should escape him. In his opinion, and he may have been right, in order to learn a foreign tongue thoroughly, it was first and foremost necessary to steep one's self in the atmosphere of the country, to give up one's ideas, to cease criticising, to yield implicitly to the local influences, to imitate the gestures, the manners, the appear-

ance of the natives as far as possible, to eat as they did, to drink the same drinks, — the system is plain.

Among other paradoxes he upheld that Latin tongues ought to be washed down with wine, and Anglo-Saxon with beer, and he maintained that for his part it was to stout and double stout that he owed his amazing progress; that drink, so essentially English, having enabled him to become intimate with the country, having suggested to him ideas unknown to the French, having given him new sensations, and revealed to him shades of interpretation hidden from every one else.

He had acquired an English soul, an English brain, an English exterior; he thought in English only, and never read French newspapers or books. Letters from his former home remained unopened on his table, for he would not allow anything to distract him in his preparation for his travels into the unknown lands of Shakespeare.

Such was his state of mind when, a number of years later, I came upon him — it was in 1843 or 1844 — in a tavern on High Holborn, where he had installed himself both for the sake of economy and in order to dine in a thorough English centre among good people

stuffed full of roast beef and ale, wholly devoid of ideas, and pretty nearly such as must have been the usual spectators at the "Globe," in front of which William Shakespeare had held horses in his youth.

His own appearance was altered. His fair mustache had fallen under the steel of a Sheffield razor, and he was as clean shaven as any of the fastidious bourgeois he made so much fun of formerly. The metamorphosis was complete, and I had before me a perfect British subject.

When he caught sight of me, his gray eyes sparkled, he shook my hand so energetically that had not my arm been solidly fastened to my shoulder, it would have remained in his grasp, and he began to talk to me with so pronounced an English accent that I could scarcely make out what he said.

"Well, my dear Vabre," said I, "if you still mean to translate Shakespeare, all you have to do now is to learn French."

"I shall set about it at once," replied he, struck more by the remark than by the joke it contained.

The miraculous comrade had long dreamt of a literary monument more enduring than brass, and wished to present the Romanticist school with a treasure it

still lacked, namely, a translation of Shakespeare absolutely true to the text, to the thought, and to the expression, reproducing the turn, the flow, and the movement of the sentences, bringing out the mingling of blank verse, rimed verse, and prose, fearlessly rendering euphuistic subtleties and coarse remarks alike, and reproducing the inward meaning of the English to an extent hitherto unapproached by any one. In a word, though poor, unknown, without means, at the cost of the bitterest hardships borne in silence, — for he was one of those men to whom starvation seems quite natural — he was preparing to carry out this gigantic work for which, since 1830, he had been making ready by persevering and conscientious study.

Vabre translated aloud to me, book in hand, passages from "Hamlet," "Othello," and "King Lear," with a local savour, an accuracy of expression, and a penetration of the meaning which made them sound wholly new to me. I also heard him explain — with a view to composing a ballet — to Carlotta Grisi, who was then dancing in London, "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in the most poetic and ingenious fashion. If the proposed ballets had been written, the parts of Miranda and Titania would

have been thoroughly understood by their lovely interpreter.

Long before Taine, as is proved by his paradox on the true way to learn English, Jules Vabre had invented or guessed at the theory of *milieux*, exactly as he had determined the true laws governing the translation of Shakespeare.

A few years ago there called upon me in my little hermitage in the Rue de Longchamps, a pale-faced gentleman, with very white hair, dressed in black and looking like a clergyman. It was Jules Vabre, who had not yet found a publisher for his translation, and who had returned to France in order to found an International School — I must beg to be forgiven for using this expression, for it did not then sound as badly as it does nowadays. He wanted to explain "Hernani" to the English, and "Macbeth" to the French. It annoyed him to see the English learning French out of "The Adventures of Telemachus," and the French studying English in the pages of the "Vicar of Wakefield."

Whether his venture proved successful or not, I do not know, for I never saw him after that call, though he promised to come again. I incline, however, to the

belief that the educational establishment was not more successful than the translation. Jules Vabre was born under an unlucky star, and treacherous fate, under the guise of ill luck, constantly pursued him. Is he dead, or is he alive? I know not, but if he is no more and there is a tombstone over his remains somewhere or other, there should be inscribed upon it, for sole epitaph: —

HE LOVED SHAKESPEARE,

just as on Thomas Hood's tombstone was cut: —

HE WROTE THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

His whole life is contained in those words.

V

GRAZIANO

VERY often, while making the long trip from Neuilly to Paris, sedately perched on top of the bus, where one at least enjoys liberty to smoke a cigar and even a pipe, I used involuntarily to glance, shortly before reaching the great Place de l'Arc de l'Étoile, at a small, low house on the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, having a ground-floor only, half hidden in and breaking in upon the line of tall and handsome houses built since the days, already pretty distant, when the little building had been erected.

The tavern — for such it is — is in no respect interesting or picturesque in itself. It is smeared thickly over with a staring red, of a shade between that of blood and that of wine, recalling the neo-rosso antico of King Ludwig of Bavaria. The wonder is that the mean and wretched hovel has not long since been swept off the land, which has risen so greatly in value; it may be due to one of those instances of

ignorant and obstinate avarice not uncommon among small proprietors.

My glance never falls upon that red splash in the line of white houses, which reminds me of the splash of blood upon the white marble steps of the Alhambra in Regnault's painting, without awakening tender feelings in me and summoning back innumerable remembrances of my youth that call up an indulgent smile on my face saddened by maturity, for I am not certain that I am any more sensible now than I was in my salad days.

If the worthy bourgeois, easily known by his triangular shirt-collar, his gold-rimmed spectacles and his watch charms, by whose side I am sitting on top of the bus, had the least suspicion of the larks I indulged in within that place, he would withdraw in horror to the very end of the seat, and most probably request the conductor to stop the vehicle and allow him to alight. Pandore would submit such an interesting case to his police sergeant, and the latter would reply, with his customary wisdom, that the Statute of Limitations applies in this instance.

It was in 183–, at which time the Champs-Elysées had not the splendid and brilliant appearance they now present. Then solitude and shadow held possession

of the great waste spaces, and foul or sinister figures sneaked about under the trees where the light of the street-lamps did not reach. A few disreputable cafés stood in the centre of the square plots, the trees of which had long retained the marks of the teeth of the Ukraine horses. Small indeed was the number of houses that bordered the roadway, for there had not been any general migration in that direction.

The two domed lodges of the Barrière de l'Étoile, with their pillars, the courses of which were alternately of square and of round stones, still stood, and looked rather well in the perspective. The enclosing wall had not been pulled down, and the fortifications were not spoken of any more than was the Great Wall of China. The high-road to Neuilly, running to Courbevoie, was lined by trees more than by houses, and traversed waste fields or passed between boardings that rose on the lower sides of the road itself. On those dusty steppes shone, like a poppy on the edge of a suburban cornfield ravaged by the Sunday trippers of both sexes, the single tavern that then bore the name of the Petit Moulin Rouge, not to be confounded with the Grand Moulin Rouge in the Allée des Veuves,

from which it differed in respect of the installation, the food, and especially the company. None of the variously named lights o' love were to be met with there, not a single chorus girl or supernumerary in the ballet, not even any shop-girls. The army of mercenaries had not yet started upon its campaign; and besides, as Gérard de Nerval used to say, there were still love affairs in those days. It was worth hearing him say this in a tone of gallantry, purposely old-fashioned and recalling the refined ways of the good old times. It was a poem. Every man had in his own corner his Laura or his Beatrix to whom he dedicated his verse.

The installation of the Petit Moulin Rouge was of the simplest. A whitewashed room, the floor dusted over with yellow sand, a counter tinned over and laden with pewters and drinking measures, a sideboard furnished with the glazed, brightly coloured earthenware adorned with cocks, bouquets of cornflowers and poppies that is to be met with nowadays only in the poorest of country inns, tables and benches of wooden boards drawn from boats, formed the architecture, the furnishing, and the plenishing of the place. As for the silverware, it consisted simply of common iron

stuff, for Viscount Ruolz had not then discovered the way to plate German silver, and the mediæval coffer had not been reintroduced. The glassware did not come from Baccarat's, but it was of that thin, sparkling, ribbed glass in which the wine smiled in the bowl, as the refrain of the old drinking-songs hath it.

Behind the common room there was a room reserved for club dinners, and a private room, devoted to the better class of customers, which opened on to a small garden lying on a fairly steep slope, and in which were arbours and shrubberies where wine and beer were served, and even, to the more fastidious, Seltzer water and sparkling lemonade.

Through a half-opened door one could look into the kitchen, with its stew-pans like unto bucklers of old. In front of the range a man of high stature and senatorial port, wearing a white jacket, appeared to be sunk in thought, as if suffering from nostalgia. His nose was huge, but perfectly handsome and correct, of the sort that by its very dimensions seems to be a caricature of beauty. By this majestic nose and the fringe of black beard that framed in his pale face, long as a theatrical mask, he was easily recognised as a child

of Græcia Magna, — a thorough-bred and genuine Neapolitan.

The painters forthwith began to prowl round him, forgetting that they had come in to drink a pewter or two of beer, and were fetching their sketch-books out of their pockets in order to turn to account that superb model whom they would willingly have travelled as far as the Strada di Piedigrotta or the Strada di Mergellina to see, and whom, by extraordinary good luck, they came upon in the suburbs, in Neuilly, in front of the kitchener of a tavern that in no wise resembled a Neapolitan osteria. He good-naturedly accepted the admiration of the artists as a man accustomed to it; he assumed the pose indicated and knew how to stand, a rare thing indeed. He would have made an excellent model, but, like the Italian cook in Balzac's tale, "Gambara," he was devoted to his art; and his self-love, amusing to Northerners, was fully justified. He cooked for us macaroni au sughillo, with tomatoes that made us lick our chops, — sublime macaroni that he alone could duplicate.

Our first cænaculum had had Mother Suguet; our second owned Graziano, and very proud indeed were we of our Neapolitan, who cooked for poor Italian

workmen, delighted at finding in the suburban tavern the pastes and cheese of their native land. Not only did we put local colour into our sketches and paintings, we had it in our food. What more could the heart of man desire, and how very far ahead of Mother Suguet's stewed rabbits was Graziano's macaroni! Graziano, a name worthy of figuring among those of the Princess Negroni's guests.

He initiated us in succession into the delights of stufato, tagliarini, gnocchi. A golden rain of Parmesan seemed to fall upon our plates from heaven, as Jupiter fell in golden rain into Danaë's lap. These mad orgies, that caused me at the time to look uneasily at the wall, lest I should see there a handwriting in letters of fire, were pompously watered with cheap wines of Suresnes and Argenteuil, bearing the names of the most renowned brands. On the other hand, we were crowned with roses, and it might have been thought that, like the cardinals dining in the Papal vineyard, each guest had his coffin in the cloak-room.

These diversions, seasoned though they were with jokes, witticisms, puns, paradoxes, strange cries, and a dialogue recalling now that of Pluto's Banquet and

now that in Béroalde de Verville's "Way to Succeed," soon began to pall upon us and to strike us as being commonplace and lacking in the picturesque and the unexpected. For, in point of fact, there was nothing very Titanic in eating macaroni in a tavern, and the thunderbolts of heaven were not fetched from the celestial arsenal on that account. To give our entertainments a touch of piquancy and to warm them up properly, something risky, audacious, revolting, Byronic, Satanic, in a word, was needed.

We were all admirers of the young Lord Byron's pranks and nocturnal bacchanalian revels in Newstead Abbey, with his young friends in monks' gowns, the folds of which, as they opened, occasionally revealed fair feminine forms; those banquets in which was handed round, full of dark wine, a cup whiter than ivory, that rosy lips touched with a slight tremor, seemed to us the highest embodiment of dandyism, thanks to the absolute indifference exhibited in them to what terrifies man in general. It is true that we did not possess Newstead Abbey, with its long, shadowy cloisters, its swans gliding about on the silvery waters in the light of the moon, nor the lovely young sinners,

fair, dark, or red-haired, but we could certainly secure a skull, and Gérard de Nerval undertook to do so, his father, a retired army surgeon, having quite a fine anatomical collection.

The skull itself was that of a drum-major, killed at the battle of the Moskowa, and not that of a girl who had died of consumption, so Gérard told us. He further informed us that he had mounted it as a cup by means of a drawer handle fastened by a nut and screw-bolt. The skull was filled with wine, and handed round, each man putting it to his lips with more or less well-concealed repugnance.

"Waiter," cried one of the neophytes, endowed with excessive zeal, "fetch us brine from the ocean!"

"What for, my boy?" asked Jules Vabre.

"Is it not told of Han d'Islande that 'he drank the briny waters in the skulls of the dead'? Well, I mean to do as he did, and to drink his health. Nothing can be more Romanticist!"

Or more absurd, and I have been unable to resist making fun of it in the "Jeunes-France."

So it was in that little red house, O worthy Joseph Prudhomme, respectable pupil of Brard and Saint-

Omer, sworn court expert, that I, your peaceful companion on the top of the bus, used to drink out of a skull like a regular cannibal, through sheer bravado, and weariness and disgust of your solemn stupidity.

VI

CÉLESTIN NANTEUIL

IN the "Jeunes-France" there is a short tale written, if I remember right, to accompany in a Keepsake, or a landscape, rather, a wonderful English engraving representing Saint Sebald's Square in Nürnberg. At that time it was customary to ask of writers who had not yet got over the delight of seeing themselves in print, a few lines of prose or verse to serve as a text for the splendid illustrations by Robinson, Cousin, Finden, Westall, Roberts, and Prout. I had contributed in my turn, and my performance bore the title, "Elias Wildmanstadius, or the Mediæval Man." He was, so to speak, the genius of that Gothic city, — one of those belated beings who have missed coming into the world at the right time, and whom the angel charged with liberating souls does not release quickly enough. Elias ought to have been born in 1460. At that time he would have lived among his contemporaries; no one would have thought

him eccentric and he would have found everybody charming. Even nowadays is not Henry Leys, the Belgian painter, a striking example of a man come too late into the world? Is not his place set apart for him in the group that comprises Lucas von Leyden, Cranach, Wohlgemuth, Schoreel, and Albert Dürer? There is nothing modern about him, and it would be a grievous mistake to suppose that he is merely an imitator, a copyist of the Gothic painters. It is a case of transportation of times, of a soul born out of season, of anachronism; nothing more. These inexplicable reappearances of ancient motives cause lively surprise, and gain for such artists a reputation for originality. A man belonging to a vanished period reappears, after a long interval, with beliefs, prejudices, and tastes forgotten for more than a century, and recalling a remote civilisation.

Elias Wildmanstadius was the symbol of these revivals of the past, but he was by no means a creation of my fancy. He was suggested to me by one of my friends in the lesser cænaculum, Célestin Nanteuil, who might have been named "The Mediæval Youth."

He looked like one of the tall thurifer angels or players on the sackbut that dwell on the gables of

cathedrals, that had come down into the city amid the busy citizens, still wearing his nimbus stuck on his head by way of a hat, and wholly unconscious of the fact that it is not customary to wear an aureole on the street. In 1830 he was about eighteen or nineteen years of age; tall, slight, slender as a fluted pillar in a fifteenth-century nave, his curling hair not unlike the acanthus of the capitals. His spiritualistic figure seemed to lengthen out and to aspire towards heaven with increased ardour; his complexion was rosy and white; the azure of the Fiesole frescoes had furnished the blue for his eyes, and his aureole-gold hair seemed to have been painted with gold, hair by hair, by one of the miniaturists of the Middle Ages.

The line in Barbier's "Pianto," which so admirably describes Raphael, —

"A long haired, oval face on slender neck poised,"—

had not then been written, but once it was, it was constantly applied to Célestin Nanteuil. His angelic face betrayed none of the preoccupations of the age. It seemed as though, from the height of his Gothic pinnacle, he overlooked the modern city, soaring over the sea of roofs, watching the swirl of the blue smoke, the squares that looked like chess-boards, the streets

that appeared like saw-cuts in blocks of stone, and the passers-by no bigger than ants, but all faintly through the shadowing vapours, while from his aerial observatory, as from a stage-box, he beheld in all their details the rose windows, the belfries bristling with crockets, the kings, the patriarchs, the prophets, the saints, the various orders of angels, the whole of the monstrous host of demons and chimeras, with their talons, their scales, their teeth, their hideous wings; the serpents, the tarasques, the gargoyles, the asses' heads, the monkeys' faces, the whole of the strange bestiary of the Middle Ages.

Being fair as fair could be, his nascent beard showed only as silky white down upon his cheeks, like peach-bloom seen only in reflected light, and he had the characteristics of the undecided sex of supernatural beings, half youth, half girl. He was easily moved and easily startled, and blushed easily. His long blue frock-coat, buttoned across his chest and cut something after the fashion of a cassock, set off the somewhat awkward, but not inelegant grace of the shy young artist who must have been like the German neo-Christian painters, the pupils of Overbeck, who maintained in Rome the doctrine of primitive Catholic art.

It must not be supposed, however, that Célestin Nanteuil strove after the thin, emaciated style, simplified into nothingness, which Overbeck appears to consider the acme of religious art. He did not, through desire for mortification, restrict himself to gray, violet, or neutral tints. He did not believe that colour was wicked sensuality and a deceitful mirage. He was a thorough Romanticist, who loved the picturesque and colour, and who possessed in a marked degree the feeling for what was then called, for want of a better term, the Mediæval, though what was meant was perfectly clear, and comprised what was neither Greek nor Roman, but belonged to the period between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries.

In his first attempts, Célestin Nanteuil drew and painted after the manner of an artist in stained glass. In order to obtain more intense tones, he made use of glass stained in fusion. Of these first attempts may be said, what one of Joseph Delorme's friends said of certain of the shorter ballads of Victor Hugo, such as "The Burgrave's Hunt," and "King John's Joust," that they were Gothic stained-glass windows. In these the breaking in of the rhythm is constantly visible as is the breaking in of the lead in the painting,

and it is impossible that it should be otherwise. In such short fanciful pieces the important thing is to attain the swing, the turn, the clerical, monkish, regal, lordly set of the figures and the brilliant colouring. It could not be better done, and the publication of the poet's ballads may help one to understand the artist's water-colours.

With wonderful facility of assimilation, Célestin had acquired the angular anatomy of armour, the extravagant cut of lambrequins, the fanciful or monstrous figures of blazonry, the flowered patterns of the blazoned skirts, the haughty port of the feudal barons, the modest air of the ladies of the manors, the hypocritical mien of the stout Carmelite friars, the sly glance of the youthful pages in particoloured hose, and in his backgrounds he cut the sky line with buildings bristling with towers, belfries, and cathedral spires that crouched amid their flying buttresses like black spiders squatting between their legs.

He was also particularly successful in setting the characters of a novel, a poem, or a drama in ornaments recalling Gothic reliquaries with triple pillars, ogee arches, canopied and bracketed niches, statuettes, figures, chimerical or symbolical animals, saints of either

sex upon a golden background which he invented as he wrought, for he had an inexhaustible fancy. He worked equally well with brush, pen, pencil, or knife. I have myself seen him, when trying to render the grain of an old wall, place a piece of tulle on the paper and dab umber through the meshes of the stuff. In this way he managed to get a coarser grain on his stonework than the roughest that Decamps painted. He could so thoroughly enter at will into the spirit or rather the feeling of old Gothic imagery that he turned out figures of Our Lady del Pilar in brocaded dalmatics, Mothers of Sorrows with the seven swords in their bosoms, and Saint Christophers bearing the Child Jesus on their shoulders as they leaned upon a palm tree, that were worthy of serving as models to the Byzantines of Épinal.

It was not through great research or severe study that he attained this talent, but through a similarity of temperament with that of the mediæval artists. He felt intuitively what he had never seen, and he could have sworn he had wandered about the tower-girt cities, and the walls with their look-outs, defended by donjons, and topped by churches with traceried spires in which he set foot for the first time. Like

Elias Wildmanstadius, he had missed his right time for coming into the world, but, more fortunate than he, he had managed, with the help of art, to create for himself surroundings that suited him, and to find contemporaries in the Romanticist school.

"Notre-Dame de Paris" was the object of his most fervent admiration, I need not say, and he drew from it suggestions for endless drawings and water-colours altogether novel and remarkable. Nothing less resembled the cheap, sentimental Romanticism that flourished about the year 1825. One of the greatest services the Romanticist school rendered to art was ridding it of this spurious stuff, and Célestin Nanteuil may well claim a large share of the honour. With an ingenuous, almost childish air, he was possessed of the finest and the best wit, and poets loved to take him for a confidant. He was one of the favourites of the Master, who enjoyed his company, and occasionally carried him off on his short excursions. He had fought heroically in every one of the great battles of Romanticism, but he indulged in no illusions as to the outcome. He felt the growing animosity on the one hand, and, on the other, failing enthusiasm, and mediocrity delighted at having its revenge against genius.

CÉLESTIN NANTEUIL

The success of "Lucrece" was praised extravagantly in order to make more striking the failure of Victor Hugo's next drama, that was soon to be produced. Troubled about the fate of the "Burgraves," Vacquerie and Meurice went to Célestin Nanteuil and asked him for three or four hundred Spartans ready to do or die rather than allow the barbarian host to cross the Thermopylæ. Nanteuil shook his long, curled and ringleted hair with an air of profoundest melancholy, and with a sigh replied to Vacquerie, who had been the spokesman: "Young man, go and tell your master that there are no more youth. I cannot find the three hundred young men."

Many years had elapsed since the splendid nights of "Hernani," when the whole of youth seemed to be rushing unanimously towards the future, intoxicated with enthusiasm and poetry, and expecting to gather for itself the palms it was fighting to secure for another. The Master's talent had gone on growing; his genius had developed and assumed Titanic proportions; he had attained to sublimity in the Æschylus-like trilogy of "Job the Accursed," that Prometheus of the Rhine, whose Caucasus was the Taurus, and whose Jupiter was Frederic Barbarossa.

It was a piece of refinement, in those days, for Romanticist editions to be adorned with a vignette, a frontispiece, or an etching by Célestin Nanteuil. The existence of the illustration now greatly increases the value of a copy of a book, and bibliophiles eagerly seek out the volumes that contain them. Célestin's compositions were set in a number of small frames round the main subject, and contained incidents drawn from the tale or poem. They are artistic etchings dashed off without the minute precautions of professionals. One of the rarest of these vignettes is the frontispiece to "Albertus, or The Soul and Sin," which recalls the mysterious drawings and the strange fantastic effects Rembrandt loves. Alphonse Royer's "Venezia la bella" is illustrated with a view of the Piazza San Marco, taken from the sea, with the regulation gondola and murdered girl.

It is impossible to reckon the number of cuts, drawings, compositions, woodcuts for illustrated works, lithographs, and head-pieces for songs turned out by Célestin Nanteuil. A terrible waste of talent, but, on the other hand, inexhaustible wealth of fancy. Is it not using one's talent generously to meet all wants, to satisfy all fancies, to suit the ever changing fashions of

the day, and to be withal a delightful painter, a clever and delicate colourist who only lacked time in which to paint, as we poets only lack time in which to write verse? It is true that people do not think as highly of you as of a learned ass who spends ten years in producing a single daub.

Although compelled by the necessities of life to mingle somewhat with the Philistines, to emerge from the old Gothic city where the streets still show pepper-pot turrets at the corners, and to walk along the broad pavements of Haussmann's rectilineal perspectives, he still loves houses with projecting stories, with pointed or dentelated gables, with painted and carved beams, with diamond-paned windows set in lead, and old furniture of shining oak. Like Elias Wildmanstadius, he keeps on dreaming of the past in Dijon, where he is the director of the Art School, and where he can study at his leisure the wondrous spire, the cathedral, and the donjon of the old Ducal Palace, the while repeating with Gaspard de la Nuit: —

" A Gothic donjon
Like Gothic spire
In a scenic sky,
Below is Dijon.

Its laughing vines
Have compeers none ;
Its spires of yore
Were half a score.
There many a stoup
Is painted or carved ;
And many a portal
Fan-like stands open.
Long may'st thou live, Dijon !
While my flat nose
Sings of thy mustard
And thy bell-striker."

Dijon has been very hospitable to Romanticist painters. Louis Boulanger, the painter of "Mazeppa," "The Witches' Sabbath," "The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew," the friend of Victor Hugo, whose name figures in "Les Orientales," the "Autumn Leaves," and "Sunbeams and Shadows," is dying there in the shadow of the school he directed, and Célestin Nanteuil is turning his leisure to account to work.

VII

OTHER MEDALLIONS— PHILOTHÉE O'NEDDY

VERY few people now remember Philothée O'Neddy, whose pseudonym is but the anagram of his name. I shall not reveal the latter; the poet having thought fit to conceal his face, I shall not undo the cords of his mask.

Philothée O'Neddy enjoyed a brief notoriety about the year 1838. He surprised people; as painters put it, he fired a pistol in the cellar and the flash was noticed. But he did not take advantage of the attention he had excited; after having stood the fire of the redoubt, his hand upon the enemy's flagstaff, he remained for a moment standing amid the smoke of battle, and then quietly went down to the bottom of the conquered wall, careless of his success. Little by little he allowed himself to be forgotten, and the path that led to his literary threshold soon disappeared under brambles, moss, and parasitical vegetation. A secret grief more

or less manfully borne, the profound fatigue that in the case of some young poets follows upon a too violent intellectual effort, the discord between the ideal and the reality, perhaps also regret for certain pieces of audacity, had strewn their gray ashes over the author of "Fire and Flame." He had withdrawn from the lesser cænaculum where he had been wont to discourse and to blaze, and all trace of him had been lost, as is too often the case in the days of dispersion, when fall the dream-Babels raised by companions in beliefs at the happy age of twenty.

In respect of his years, he was my contemporary, that is, he had attained his majority after 1830. In the Romanticist school, we were all precocious and might every one of us have inscribed upon our first volume of verse: "Poems of a Minor," like Lord Byron.

At the time that Philothée O'Neddy frequented Petrus' cellar and Jehan's place — the young sculptor had set up his studio in a fruit shop at the corner of the Rue Vaugirard — he was a young fellow whose peculiarity was that he had the complexion of a mulatto, and thick, fair, wavy hair like a Scandinavian. His eyes were light blue, and his short sight made them

project; his lips were heavy, red, and sensual; his general appearance was African, and had won for him the appellation of Othello.

Who his Desdemona might be, no one knew, and it was absolutely certain that he had no Iago, for our whole company loved him. He never left off his eyeglasses; he slept with them on, for without them, he used to say, he could not make out his dreams clearly and thus lost the enchantments of night; the poetic spells of the sylphs, the alluring charms of the graceful vampires that haunt the dreams of youth, were lost in a faint mist.

One and the same characteristic is common to all the early works of that period: overflowing lyricism and striving after passion. The main points of the programme which every man endeavoured to carry out to the best of his ability, the ideals and the secret desires of the Romanticist youth, were to freely develop every caprice of thought, even if it offended taste, conventionality, and rule; to hate and repel to the utmost of one's power the profane vulgar, as Horace called it, the grocers, Philistines, or bourgeois, as the mustachioed and long-haired young painter students named them; to celebrate love in terms that might set fire to the

paper on which one wrote; to set it up as the sole end and sole means of happiness, and to sanctify and deify Art, which was to be upheld as a second Creator.

No one more than Philothée O'Neddy exhibited these characteristics of extravagance and tension. The expression "paroxyst," first employed by Nestor Roqueplan, seemed to have been invented specially for Philothée. In all he did the tone was excessive, the colouring exaggerated and violent, the utmost bounds of expression reached, the very originality aggressive, and the whole almost dripping with incredibility, as Xavier Aubryet used to say. Nevertheless, the feeling for the poetic period and the harmony of rhythm made itself felt through the absurd paradoxes, the sophistical maxims, the incoherent metaphors, the turgid hyperbolæ and the six-foot words.

Philothée was a metrical writer; he knew how to fashion a line on the anvil, and when he had drawn from the fire the incandescent Alexandrine, he could give it, amid a shower of sparks, the form he wished by means of his heavy and persevering hammering. Had he not retired so early, he would unquestionably have made a name for himself in the sacred battalion. He

possessed force, a quality seldom met with in artists, but at the very outset he lost courage through a weariness the secret of which remains hidden in the breast, and even more frequently, in the heart of the poet. To attain the end he sought, he would have had to work much harder.

"Enthusiasm and study, love and poesy, In your vast ambrosial sea Our souls of fire in ecstasy Should lose themselves! In you, endowed with wondrous genius, Giving birth to purest happiness, I should be an artist greater than God himself!"

I once owned a copy of "Fire and Flame" with an autograph dedication by the author; but I have it not now. Have you ever noticed that curious books, that have become rare, have legs, like the little boats concerning which the child consulted his father? They plainly have, else they would not scuttle about, but would remain quietly on the shelf in the library where they have been carefully placed between two well-bound volumes of high morality. When the selections drawn from one of Charles Asselineau's small Romanticist collection fall into my hands, I am filled with bitterest regrets. Every one of these books now so rare, so hard to find, so precious, that fetch such high

prices at auction, I could have had for nothing, with the etching, the woodcut, the portrait, the ornamental letter, or whatever constitutes the bibliophile's delight in his innocent pursuit and inspires him with such sweet emotions. I could have owned those *princeps* editions, the authoritative ones, revised by the authors themselves. They would have come one after another to take their place behind the glass of my shelves; locked up, however, now, since there are honest people who steal books. Unfortunately it is too late; most of my friends are dead, the editions have long been out of print, and here I am writing "A History of Romanticism," a movement in which I have played a small part, without possessing a single one of these books, though every one bore, as a safeguard, the master's sacred name.

Some five or six years ago, — though it seems an age, so many things have happened since, — Célestin Nanteuil was appointed Director of the Art School at Dijon, as I stated when speaking of him. This appointment secured for the brave and courageous artist, worn out by a life too well filled with labour, or drudgery rather, a chance to enjoy leisure in which real painting might find room; so there was no reason why we

should be sad, and yet we all were, — it was Nanteuil's *hoc erat in votis*, — and we resolved to celebrate his honours by giving him a dinner.

The old bands of "Hernani" and "Lucrezia Borgia," every one who had fought the Classicist hydra with its hundred bewigged heads, either on the stage or at meetings of hanging committees, the few that had been faithful to the "Roi s'amuse," and the "Burgraves," the old studio chums, and the young pupils also, nay, even some who were believed to be lost to art and to have passed over to the ranks of the Philistines, assembled from all parts of the land and met in a restaurant at the corner of the Rue du Sentier. When every one had arrived and the roll had been called, one of us who knew "Hernani" well, having fought at thirty-two pitched performances, declaimed the following lines : —

> "Call not for their powerless swords :
> For every man you summon, sixty attend me.
> Sixty ! every one worth the four of you !
> So, let us settle our quarrel here together."

It was long since such a Romanticist agape had been held. One would have had to go back to the days when, for lack of the salt sea wave, we drank cheap

wine at the Moulin Rouge in the skulls of the dead; but many a year had elapsed since then. Snow had fallen upon the mountain tops; pepper and salt had mingled in our beards; noses had become red, the smooth cheeks of yore had wrinkles, and in some of the guests, whom I had not met for a long time, I could perceive the shadow of their youth. I looked somewhat anxiously at my fellow-guests, and I said to myself: "Do I produce the same effect upon them? Do I seem as ugly to them, as old, as morose as they appear to me? Is this, then, all that is left of the brilliant band of 'Hernani' that so cleverly took the bull by the horns and worried the public? How desperately weary of life they look, and how little eager to leap the barriers!"

So the dinner began sadly, as do all entertainments. These valiant fellows, once so fierce, would not even have torn in pieces a member of the Academy or of the Institute. At last the ice was broken; the wine stirred up the hearts; the memories of the old days came back, sweet and charming; we talked of the happy times of poverty when we fed on glory and love. Was there ever better fare? We mingled in our talks then, like devotees of the same god, lines known by

every one, like the responses of a litany. We were young, handsome, proud, full of enthusiasm.

In a corner, between two of Nanteuil's comrades, I saw, towards the end of dinner, when men were beginning to leave their seats to go and talk with a friend at the other end of the table, a man whose appearance was familiar to me. It was Philothée O'Neddy, who had emerged from the catacombs of the mysterious life into which he had disappeared, in order to come and drink a stirrup cup with his friend Célestin Nanteuil on his way to Dijon, instead of to San Jago di Compostello, as he had intended. His hair was still wavy, but sprinkled with silver, and the mark made by his eye-glasses upon his nose had become so deep with time that the glasses stuck in it of themselves.

"Well," said I, going up to him and shaking his hand, "when will your second volume of verse appear?"

He gazed at me with his watery, frightened blue eyes, and answered with a sigh: —

"When there are no more bourgeois."

VIII

GÉRARD DE NERVAL

I HAVE not yet spoken of Gérard, good old Gérard, as we used to call him in our little company, and never did man better deserve the title. Kindness streamed from him as light from a luminous body; it was always visible and formed a special atmosphere round him. It really seemed as if it were placing Gérard under an obligation to ask him a favour; he thanked you for having thought of him, and at once started off, going from the Arc de l'Étoile to the Bastille, or from the Pantheon to the Batignolles, in order to offer to some newspaper editor a penniless friend's article, or to find out the reason why the accepted article had not long since been published. He walked with a step as light as an ostrich's, borne off the ground at every step, and which an Arab horse finds it difficult to keep up with. He was not a sedentary man; if he was shut up between four walls, with a desk in front of him, his inspiration vanished and his

thought died. He was an ambulatory writer, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Restif de la Bretonne, and he wasted no time on his trips, every one of which had for object the doing of a service to a comrade or a friend.

He worked as he walked, and from time to time stopped short and hunted in his capacious pockets for a note-book, made of a few sheets sewn together, on which he wrote down a thought, a sentence, a word, a reminiscence, a sign understood of himself alone, then shut the book up and started off again as fast as before. That was the way in which he composed. More than once I have heard him wish that he could travel through life along an endless band of paper that should roll itself up behind him, and upon which he would note the thoughts that occurred to him, so that at the end of his road they would form a single volume with a single line. His mind was like an apodal swallow; he was all wings and had no feet, or at most a scarcely perceptible claw by which he could hang on for a moment while taking breath. He came and went, made abrupt zigzags with unexpected turns, ascended, descended, rose again, soared and moved in the atmosphere with the joyous freedom of a being

in its own element. It was not restless mobility, frivolous lightsomeness, fantastic hopping about, but natural agility and the power to float and rise.

At times he might be seen at a street corner, hat in hand, in a sort of ecstasy, plainly away from the place where stood his body, his eyes shining like blue stars, his light, fair hair, already somewhat thin, forming a sort of golden mist upon his porcelain brow, the most perfectly shaped cup that ever held a human brain, as he climbed the spiral stairs of some mental tower of Babel. When I came upon him thus occupied, I was always careful not to accost him abruptly, lest I should cause him to fall from the heights of his reverie like a somnambulist suddenly awakened as he walks with closed eyes upon the edge of a roof. I used to stand in the line of his gaze, giving him time to return from the depths of his dream, and waiting until his eye should fall upon me of itself, when, apparently at least, he quickly enough returned to the reality of life with a friendly or a witty remark.

The Gérard of these early years was not very like the Gérard whom most writers of to-day have met at Le Peletier's Divan. Then the future smiled upon

him, and he knew no other misfortune than the refusals of theatrical managers, who declined to put on the plays of an unknown youth, though they received them with hypocritical welcome, and drew down upon themselves in consequence, in the preface to Petrus Borel's "Rhapsodies," the following sharp reprimand: —

"Here is to you, good old Gérard! When will the managers, the excisemen of literature, allow your works, so handsomely welcomed by their private committees, to reach the committee of the public?"

At that time he had not met the snail carrying its lump of earth on the Syrian roads, which struck him as an omen full of evil, nor the hideous tame crow, the companion of the poor people from whom he accepted a cup of wine on the passage from Beirut to Saint Jean d'Acre, and which he looked upon as a messenger of woe sent him direct by fate. A tame crow was croaking and flapping its wings in the Rue de la Vieille-Lanterne also, on the landing-place of the filthy stairs, snow-spotted, close to the dread bars, and perhaps as he was dying poor Gérard de Nerval, by one of those swift returns of memory that so frequently occur at times of crisis, remembered the crow he had seen

on the vessel's deck and that fascinated him with its ominous stare.

But at the time of which I am speaking not a single black cloud lowered on the dawn of his life, and it was impossible to note the germs of future disaster. No fortune teller who might have predicted his dismal fate would have been believed, as he traced in the distance the fatal rope, tenuous as a cobweb.

Let us, however, peacefully enjoy the cloudless dawn, and come back to the Gérard of those days whose name was not Gérard de Nerval, but Labrunie. Like Stendhal, he loved to conceal his individuality under various pseudonyms; once he ascertained that he had been recognised under one of his false noses, he would cast it away and put on another mask and another domino. He signed his writings "Fritz," "Aloysius," or with other names, and it is difficult now to make out his works in the dusty catacombs of journalism. Just as much as I courted notoriety did he seek the softened tints of half-light. I should have liked to march through the streets preceded by negro kettle-drummers and "followed by a hundred buglers blowing a blast," but if he heard his name spoken, he disappeared at

once. Popular papers, with a large circulation and a great literary reputation, endeavoured to get him on their staffs or to obtain articles from him. He preferred to bury his writings in some obscure sheet, that paid little and had but a scant subscription-list, just as if it pleased him to have no readers, — a curious kind of pleasure, but which one can understand in the case of certain proud and refined minds that are as much shocked by blundering praise as by coarse criticism.

In those eccentric days when every man sought to make his mark by peculiarities of dress, soft felt Rubens hats, velvet cloaks with the end thrown over the shoulder, Van Dyck doublets, frogged jackets, Hungarian braided coats, or other exotic garments, Gérard dressed in the simplest, least noticeable manner, like a man who desires to mingle with the crowd without attracting attention. In summer, he wore black alpaca suits, and in winter a dark blue overcoat carefully made like everybody else's. It may be that he did not wish to be known, and

Digito monstrari et diceri : hic est,

until he should be worthy of fame and he had attained so close to his ideal as to bear being confronted with it without having to blush.

I do not know why Gérard always had the reputation of being the laziest of men. Other men have been treated to a similar reputation though they have worked hard all their lives and their works might furnish a pyre for them. On the contrary, the star-gazer, the butterfly hunter, the blower of soap-bubbles, the so-called idler led the most active intellectual life. Under his outward calm, he lived in the fiercest of mental effervescence. It is to this period of his life that belongs the "Laforêt," in which he described Molière at home, with the brave and sensible servant whom he did not disdain to consult, thinking her advice better than that of the Lysidas, the Dorantes, and other wits of the Court and the town. It was a pasticcio in Molière's style, wrought out with thorough knowledge of the speech, the style, and the turns of expression of that seventeenth century so completely unknown to the modern Classicists who swear by it. The whole piece was wrought out in a scale of harmoniously dull tones such as time gives to old tapestry. I do not know what became of this play, which, unless my memory plays me false, had been accepted by the Odéon.

Nor is it known in what drawer, the key of which has long been lost, in what trunk gone astray, or in

what rat-haunted attic fetched up, after many vicissitudes, the "Prince of Fools," one of the cleverest and most successful imitations of the great "Devil plays" of the Middle Ages. The "Prince of Fools" — which treated of a company of jugglers who made their way, under the pretext of giving a performance, into a feudal castle for the purpose of rescuing a fair lady held in durance vile by a tyrannical husband or father — contained a play within a play, like those ivory balls which the patient Chinese carve, one out of another. It was a mystery after the Gothic manner, and its setting consisted of a blazing mouth of Hell, surmounted by a Paradise of starry azure. An angel who descended from the azure sphere threw dice with the devil, the latter staking souls, the former, I forget what. The angel cheated, through excess of zeal, and with the object of taking back as many of his friends into Paradise as he could. The devil lost his temper and called the angel "great gawky fellow, sly fowl," and threatened, if he caught him again at his tricks, to pull every feather out of his wings, so that he would be unable to fly back to his Master. The quarrel grew bitter, and led to a row, under cover of which the lover, protected by the Prince of Fools,

succeeded in carrying off his lady fair. The mystery was written in octosyllabic verse, like the ancient mysteries.

The "Prince of Fools" was preceded by a prologue, composed by me, and intended to prepare the public for the strangeness of the spectacle; for plays in the style of the "Great Devil Play of Douai" and the "Estates of Death" were scarcely in the taste of the day. I had even added to the manuscript a coloured drawing representing the mouth of Hell with affected Gothic naïveté. I mention this for the benefit of my dear friend and colleague Charles Asselineau, the Lindhurst of Romanticism, who is engaged in rescuing from oblivion all those books with strange illustrations and characteristic typography, which he catalogues, describes, and adorns with all the enthusiastic minuteness of a true bibliophile.

Asselineau, like every refined being endowed by heaven with a pretty hobby, has his black tulip, his blue dahlia, his desideratum: he would like to possess the original manuscript of the "Prince of Fools." It is a vain ambition, an ideal that can never be realised. Yet he has sought it for many years, hoping and despairing, clinging to the faintest indication, moving

mountains of papers, rummaging in the dusty collections in theatres, the resting-place of failures. But ever in vain; the undiscoverable manuscript flees before him in his obstinate pursuit — it flees without even showing up once.

The manuscript of the "Prince of Fools," unless some ignorant cook used it to burn off a chicken, was of oblong form and written upon blue paper that must have turned yellow with age. It was written throughout in Gérard's own neat, fine, well-ordered hand, with a broad margin on either side for the better setting off and airing of the verse. The prologue is in my handwriting, but that does not create a contrast, for our hands were twin as were our hearts, and they were so alike that they were mistaken the one for the other.

That is all I can tell Asselineau, who will, I hope, come upon his blue dahlia, the symbol of eternal desire, which it is perhaps better never to come upon.

All the thoughts of youth were turned to the stage, the luminous centre towards which converged the most diverse forms of attention, from the most serious to the most frivolous, — the stage, in front of which woman, dressed as if for a tourney, listens, claps her white gloved hands, seems to understand, to judge, and to

award the palm. The press had not then begun to publish daily an instalment of a novel, so that the stage was the only tribune from which a poet could exhibit himself to the crowd, with the consequence that many a drama was written in our cænaculum.

It goes without saying that they were invariably refused. Nevertheless, I found it difficult to believe that they were absolutely bad, and I regretted the loss of a drama in verse by de Nerval, "The Lady of Carouge," to which I had largely collaborated, and which at least contained an original idea. It was the story of an Arab or Saracen Emir, brought back from Palestine by a crusading baron, and who had fallen in love with his captor's wife. The contrast between Islamism and Christianity, between the tent of the nomad and the feudal donjon, between the coldness of the North and the fiery passions of the desert, between savage ferocity and chivalry, expressed in verse that lacked neither vigour nor beauty, and certainly not technical skill at least, for Victor Hugo's pupils know how to write verse, seemed to me suited to bring out some dramatic situations. Such was the opinion of Alexandre Dumas, who, five or six years later, wrote on this subject, which Gérard de Nerval had no doubt

told him of, "Charles VII. among his great Vassals." Only, in our case Yacoub bore the name of Hafiz. I considered it quite an honour that a character of my invention should have been thought worthy of being put on the stage and of serving as the pivotal figure in a drama by the author of "Henry III." and of "Christina at Fontainebleau."

To be done with the works of youth now lost, let me mention a drama drawn from Byron's touching and most pathetic poem, "Parisina," by Augustus MacKeat, Gérard, and myself. I remember it in the distant depths of that past as containing remarkable passages. Take it that these were the work of my collaborators, so that my modesty may not suffer over much, and you will be in the right. Maquet proved that he thoroughly understood the stage. I claim for myself but a few well-turned tirades, and you may take my word that they were so, although the work has been destroyed and the proof is not forthcoming.

Besides all this, Gérard had written a prose drama out of "Nicolas Flamel," a fragment of which, of great originality and remarkably effective, subsists in the columns of the "Mercure de France." Where is

the rest of it? It may be that Bibliophile Jacob knows. De Nerval was also busy with a social drama, the idea of which was somewhat like that of "Eugene Aram," and with a "Queen of Sheba," which never got as far as Solomon, and whose many adventures I shall relate to you. So for an idler he was a pretty hard-working man.

Gérard de Nerval's avoidance of the reputation he finally had to accept was not in the least, I am in a position to affirm it, the result of a plan to stimulate curiosity, but was due to rare conscientiousness and to the deepest respect for art. However carefully he wrought out his works, he still considered them too imperfect, and to stamp them with his name struck him as a piece of puerile vanity.

He was one of the earliest translators of "Faust." It was a difficult task, at that time, to translate into our tongue, which had been rendered excessively timid, the strange and mysterious beauties of that ultra-Romanticist drama. Nevertheless, he succeeded in doing so, and the Germans, who pretend to be unintelligible, had to confess themselves beaten. The German sphinx's riddle had been read by the French Œdipus.

GÉRARD DE NERVAL

His familiarity with Goethe, Uhland, Bürger, and Tieck imparted to Gérard's own work a certain shade of dreaminess which occasionally caused his own writings to be mistaken for translations of those of unknown poets from beyond the Rhine. It was only in his thought, however, that this Teutonism showed, for few writers of our day wrote in more chastened, more clear and more transparent French than he did. Although, like all the successful writers of to-day, he took part in the great Romanticist movement of 1830, the style of the eighteenth century sufficed him for the expression of a whole range of fantastic and singular ideas. He writes a Hoffmannic tale with the pen of Cazotte, and in his "Women of Cairo" one would swear it was Galland speaking with the tongue of Scheharazade. The most incredible eccentricity assumes, in his work, classical forms, so to speak. He has tender pallor, tones purposely deadened, faded tints, like those of tapestries in old castles, of wondrous harmony and softness, far more satisfying than the brand-new gilding and the bright illuminations that men were so lavish of. Details, discreetly attenuated, allow the ensemble to retain its full importance, and against the background of soft neutral tints the figures the author

desires to bring out show with an illusion of life truly magical, like those portraits painted on a background of vague shadow which irresistibly attract the glance.

Gérard de Nerval's sympathies and studies naturally drew him to Germany, which he often visited and where he made many a fruitful stay. The shadows of the old Teutonic oaks have more than once fallen upon his brow with confidential whispers; he has wandered under the limes with the heart-shaped leaves; he has saluted on the banks of the springs the white-robed elf whose wet white skirt drags through the green grass; he has seen the crows flying about above the Kyffhäusen; the kobolds have issued in his presence from out the cracks of the Hartz rocks, and the witches of the Brocken have danced round the young French poet, whom they took for a Iena student, the great round of the Walpurgisnachtstraum. Happier than the rest of us, he has leaned upon the table from which Mephistopheles brought out with his gimlet a stream of blazing wine. He descended the steps of that Berlin cellar down which too often stumbled the author of "Saint Sylvester's Eve" and "The Golden Jug." With calm glance he has gazed upon the play of light produced by the Rhine wine in the emerald-green roemer,

and has noted the queer shapes of the smoke of the pipes as it rose above Hegelian discussions in æsthetic drinking-shops.

It is to these excursions that we owe charmingly fanciful pages that may be safely placed by the side of the best chapters in Sterne's "Sentimental Journey." The author, in the most unexpected manner, mingles reflection and reverie, fancifulness and reality, trips into fairyland and travels on the highway. Now he is mounted on a chimera with flapping wings, and now upon a lean hired hack, and from a comical incident he passes to an ethereal ecstasy. He can play upon a postilion's horn the enchanting melodies of Achin d'Arnim and Clement Brentano, and when he stops at the hop-covered door of an inn to drink the brown München beer, the stein turns in his hands into the cup of the King of Thule. As he walks along, lovely faces smile upon him out of the foliage, the student Anselmo's pretty snakes dance on the tips of their tails, while the flowers that carpet the bank on the other side of the ditch indulge in pantheistic conversations. The hidden life of Germany breathes in these fanciful walks, in which description turns into legend and personal impressions into clever philosophical or literary

remarks. Only, it is to be noted that the French vein is never broken by Teutonic divagations.

It is to this time of our author's life that belongs the fine drama called "Leo Burckart," which was performed at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and which is one of the most noteworthy works of the day. Leo Burckart is a journalist who has ventilated, in the paper he edits, such bold political ideas and such novel plans of reform as to lead people to fear the action of the authorities against him. Instead of causing his arrest, however, the Prince, convinced of Leo's sincerity, gives him the office of the minister the journalist has criticised, and orders him to apply his theories and to put his dreams into practice. Leo accepts and comes into direct contact with men and things,— he, the free dreamer, who in his own study was so successful in balancing the world on the tip of his pen. Carried away by an abstract ideal, he seeks to govern without making use of the means of government. Like a minister of the Golden Age, he will not listen to the whispered communications of the police, and is therefore unaware that the life of the Prince is threatened and that his own honour is compromised. Looked upon by his former party as a traitor, distrusted by the Court

party, doing himself what he ought to have done through his subordinates, offending vested interests by exaggerated rigorism, walking blindly through the maze of intrigues, he loses his popularity after having been but a few months in power, loses his friends and almost his private honour, and thereupon resigns his office, having lost faith in his dreams and his talent, and scarce believing in man and in humanity. Yet no Machiavellian trap has been set for him; the Prince has loyally seconded him, and frankly aided the thinker.

The impression made by this drama, remarkable for its philosophical impartiality, would be gloomy were the play not brightened by an accurate and lifelike picture of the universities. Nothing can be more cleverly comical than the conspiracies of the students, for whom a drinking bout is the main interest in life, and who dream of Brutus as they fill their pipes. The play, the work of a poet who drank to intoxication of the heady wine of German mysticism, seems, strange to say, the coolly wrought-out work of an old diplomat used to affairs and grown gray in the knowledge of men. There is no passion, no violence, not a single piece of declamation, but, on the other hand, in

every part a clear and serene reason, an indulgence full of pity and understanding.

These works were followed by long trips in the East. "The Women of Cairo," and "The Nights of Ramazan" mark this new period. It was a sudden transition from the mists of Germany to the sunshine of Egypt, and a less well-endowed nature might have been dazzled by it, but Gérard de Nerval, in his book, the success of which has grown with each successive edition, managed to avoid commonplace enthusiasm and the garish descriptions of ordinary tourists. He takes us into the very life of the East, which is closed so straightly against the man who travels rapidly. Under a transparent veil he has related his own adventures in the modest tone and the playful artlessness which make certain pages of the "Memoirs" of the Venetian Carlo Gozzi such attractive reading. The story of Zeynab, the lovely yellow slave purchased from the djellab in an impulse of philanthropical pity, and who is the cause of so many pretty Oriental incidents that disturb his trip, is told with perfect art and the utmost good taste. The Coptic weddings, the Arab marriages, the evenings with the opium eaters, the manners of the fellahs, all

these details of Mohammedan life are described with uncommon cleverness, wit, and fidelity of observation.

The legends of the East were bound to exercise great influence upon an imagination so easily excited as that of Gérard de Nerval, prepared, besides, long before for these poetical witcheries by the Sanscrit erudition of Schlegel, the "Oriental-Occidental Divan" of Goethe, and the "Ghazels" of Rückert and Platen. The "Legend of Khalif Hakem" and the "Story of Belkis and Solomon" prove how deeply Gérard de Nerval was filled with the profound and mysterious spirit of these strange stories in which every word contains a symbol. It may even be said that he thus acquired certain suggestions of one belonging to the inner circle, certain ways of illuminati which would lead at times to the belief that he is stating his own sentiments. I should not be greatly surprised to learn that he, like the author of "The Devil in Love," had received the visit of a stranger who used Masonic signs, and who was quite surprised to find that he was not a brother Mason. Preoccupied by thoughts of the invisible world and of cosmogonic myths, he swung for a time in the circle of Swedenborg, Abbé Terrasson, and the author of "The Count of Cabalis." But his

visionary tendencies are fully compensated for by studies of the utmost realism, such as those upon Spifane, Restif de la Bretonne, the fullest and most intelligent written upon this Balzac of the gutter, and which is as interesting as the best worked-out novel. "Sylvia," our writer's most recent work, strikes me as absolutely irreproachable. It is made up of memories of his childhood recalled by the lovely sites of Ermenonville, by walks along flowery banks and by the side of the lakes, in the light mists reddened by the dawn, an idyl of the environs of Paris so pure, so fresh, so perfumed, so wet with dew, that it makes one unconsciously think of Daphnis and Chloe, of Paul and Virginia, of the chaste pairs of lovers who bathe their white feet in the springs or remain on the edge of the woods of Arcadia. It recalls a Greek statue with a light touch of pastel on lips and cheeks, due to the fancy of the sculptor.

IX

THE GREEN PORTFOLIO

EVERY time that I happen, when idle or sad, and impelled to plunge into the memories of the past, to open the old green portfolio, in which lie, more dusty than forgotten, the papers Gérard de Nerval used to leave in my rooms, as a bird drops its feathers as it goes, I am sure to lose myself in them for the rest of the day.

Among the notes, extracts, rough drafts, concise memoranda, articles begun, variants of the same thought turned over and over, philosophical or moral maxims condensed in golden Pythagorean verse, a form Gérard was particularly fond of, dramatic dialogues, numbered and cut like dressed stones waiting to be set in the vaulting, among all those bits of literary architectonics, scattered and mixed up to such an extent that no eye, not even that of friendship, can make out the plan, — I occasionally come across letters of mine, scented with vinegar and slashed in the ports of the Levant by the

scissors of the health officers, letters yellow as mummy bandages, written to my friend while he was travelling in the East, and that, more fortunate than I, rode in his caravan. I re-read them, taking care not to tear them along the well-worn creases, and a low, soft, far-away voice, yet still recognisable, for it is my own, whispers in my ear, in well-known words, in turns habitual to me, thoughts and news then current in our world. How far off it all is now, swept away into deep forgetfulness by the swift darkness! And yet how near still; how little has the heart changed! The same thoughts still meander through the convolutions of the brain, meeting and greeting each other at the same old places. Most of the sentences in those letters might have been written yesterday, and on arrival at their destination they would not have seemed any more old-fashioned than if they had been composed that very morning. Man does not change as much as he fancies he does.

I come once more upon the paradoxes I indulged in of yore, and they are lively enough, considering their age; some of them, moreover, have since been accepted as truths. The judgments of my youth, so insolently sincere, were not always dictated by

strong feeling; some are equitable and judicious, for one is sometimes in the right at twenty and in the wrong at sixty. A man should not deny his youth; the grown man merely carries out the dreams of the youngster. Every fine work is a seed planted in April which will bloom in October. A man who has no ideas when he is twenty-one will never have any.

I pray to be forgiven for all this moralising, and for stringing aphorisms together as Sancho Panza was wont to string proverbs, while I sit opposite a portfolio half emptied of its contents. A multitude of bits of paper on which, in the form of condensed formulæ, of microscopic writing mingled with ciphers as difficult to read as the private notes of Raymond Lulli, Faust, or Herr Trippa, are summed, concentrated, sublimated like drops of elixir, all the doctrines of this world: theogonies, mythologies, religions, systems, interpretations, glosses, utopias, confusedly fluttering and whirling, with here and there a hermeneutic or cabalistic sign, for Gérard did not disdain to call upon Nicolas Flamel, or to have a bit of talk with "the White Woman" and "the Red Servant," so that if one were to pick up one of these scraps, it would prove

as engrossing as the cryptogram in Edgar Poe's "The Gold Bug," and require frightful intensity of attention.

It will be best, therefore, to pick out of the bundle the following simple letter, less yellowed, less musty, less browned by the hellish reagents, and really containing only its evident meaning. As I place it in the light, it positively has a kindly, candid, sympathetic look. It was written by a friend dear to both of us, Bouchardy. In 1857 that letter was but an autograph; now it may take its place as a relic in the green portfolio consecrated to the memory of my dead friend. I shall transcribe it to show how refined and lovely was Bouchardy's soul, and how staunch was the friendship that united the members of our little company. Many years had elapsed since we had met at Petrus Borel's, and we had all scattered in quest of glory and daily bread. It will show, however, how green the memory of our friendship had remained: —

"*January* 12, 1857.

"DEAR THÉOPHILE:

"I should assuredly have kept deep within my heart the gratitude I feel for the kind and beautiful things you said of me in your article of January 5, but in the course of it you referred to the golden by-

gone days of our friendship, and as that time constitutes the one and only remembrance of my youth, I must indulge in the delight of recalling it with you.

"Nor, indeed, can we too often recall it, for it was the loveliest of our dreams, dreamed with wide-awake eyes, and hearts full of faith, of enthusiasm, and of love.

"We did not dream . . . when some unknown and swift current had borne us all together to the same shore, so that we might meet with echoes for our yet hesitating voices, and ardent souls for our bold and fervent ones.

"A blessed and fair meeting was that, my dear Théophile, in which each was to the brother who loved him a devoted friend, and a travelling companion who made one forget the length of the way and the fatigue of the journey.

"Meetings lovelier than can be told, those in which each and all wished for the success of all the others, without mad exaggeration or collective vanity; in which each of us was ready to lend his shoulder to the foot of him who meant to try to climb and to succeed.

"Which amongst us were rich or predestined? We knew not, for we were a family that owned no Benjamin and recognised no right of primogeniture. Whilst the Fourierists started phalansteries, the Saint-Simonians new social contracts, and the Democrats formed new plans, we, deaf to all these voices, heard only the whisper of art as it moved in the childbirth of progress. Our only weapons were the pen, the brush, the lyre, and the sculptor's chisel; our only gods were the great masters; our only standard that of art, which we meant to unfurl and defend.

"Were we indebted to fortunate temperaments for these sublime thoughts? or were we favoured by circumstances? It matters little; the golden beams that sought us out individually drew us towards each other and melted into one single treasury, from which we one and all drew, without ever exhausting it, faith, trust, confidence, enthusiasm, hope, and even generosity.

"How was it, friend of mine, that reflection that cools, anxiety that enervates, jealousy that parts, that all the evil passions that enter everywhere and at all times, could not penetrate into our meetings of old?

THE GREEN PORTFOLIO

"It is a sweet and deep mystery, is it not? — which even now returns to our surprised and delighted hearts, like a vague reminiscence of blessed youth, of magnetic confraternity, of enchanted beatitude.

"It was a happy time, of which we ought to be proud, dear Théophile; for when a man has travelled through life, so often saddened by bitterness, he ought to be proud of having enjoyed a few happy hours, and he ought to boast of that happiness. *Remember!*

"J. BOUCHARDY."

Rather more than a quarter of a century lies between that letter and 1830. The remembrance is as sweet as if it were but of yesterday; the feeling of enchantment still survives. From the land of exile where I am travelling, earning fame by the sweat of my brow, tramping through briars, over stones, and along roads bristling with man-traps, I look back with regretful, melancholy gaze upon the lost Paradise — and yet I ate no apple and in no wise disobeyed our lord Hugo! No doubt such delight could not last. It was impossible to conceive of a fairer mode of life than being young, intelligent, loving, capable of understanding each other and communicating with the ele-

ments of art; and so all those who lived that life are still dazzled by the memory of it. Just see how an allusion in a newspaper article tickles dear old Bouchardy to the very depths of his soul; how he still answers to the call, how he remembers with quickening pulse; how he is borne away in thought to the little room constellated with medallions by Jehan du Seigneur and sketches by Louis Boulanger, on one of those nights when we talked of art and the ideal, nature, form, and colour, and other like subjects, which then appeared to us, and rightly, of the most burning importance, just as they would be to-day. How ardently he would take part in the discussion now, and especially how intently he would listen.

That tender and simple letter from him whom we used to call the Maharajah of Lahore, the golden-skinned, blue-haired prince, and which I come upon by chance in the Field of the Dead of my portfolios, that shall soon be as crowded as the Fields of Eyoub and Scutari, has occupied my thoughts the whole day, and done away with the article I had intended to write. I had promised to relate the voyage of Belkis, the Queen of Sheba, whom Gérard de Nerval had gone to fetch out of the depths of the Orient, in company with de la

Huppe, in order to bring her, he claimed, to Solomon, the erotic author of "Sir-Hasirim," but in reality to Meyerbeer, in Berlin, the author of "Robert the Devil," who wanted to get out of it a soprano part that would turn the head of every prima donna. But I could not manage it. Bouchardy's letter insisted upon being printed, as if it called out on behalf of our dead companions. The word REMEMBER, placed at the end of the letter, was put there in mysterious and commanding fashion. Remember! Yes, I do remember, and this book is the proof that I do. Belkis may wait, for a few weeks will not age her whose youth is reckoned by thousands of years. Those must first be heard who speak and move about under the earth like the moles and Hamlet's father.

All the same I had no end of interesting details to give you concerning the seventy-five pre-Adamite kings that appeared in the prologue, and which Meyerbeer, as timorous then as he was later, wished to cut out as being "dangerous;" concerning the divine Lilith also, Adam's first wife, and ancestress of the Queen of Sheba; also about the gown worn by Belkis, a gown fit to make Worth wonder, adorned as it was with seventy different kinds of gems, and the train of which was borne

by a monkey, dressed in cloth of gold, that every now and then lifted it up with a lascivious grin. Nor should I have failed to describe the instinctive gesture which, causing Belkis to mistake the polished pavement for water, led her to lift up her skirts in the presence of Solomon.

X

THE LEGEND OF THE RED WAISTCOAT

THE red waistcoat! It is more than forty years since I wore it, yet people still speak of it, and will go on speaking of it in days to come, so deep did that flash of colour penetrate the public's eye. If the name of Théophile Gautier happens to be spoken in the presence of a Philistine, even of one who has never read a line of prose or verse of mine, he knows me at least by the red waistcoat I wore at the first performance of "Hernani," and he says, with the self-satisfied look of the man who knows what he is talking about: "Oh, yes. You mean the young fellow with the red waistcoat and the long hair." And that is the way I shall go down to posterity. My books, my verse, my articles, my travels will be forgotten, but men will remember my red waistcoat. That spark will go on shining when everything else of mine will long since have been lost in night,

and it will set me apart from those of my contemporaries whose works were no better than mine, but who wore dark-coloured waistcoats. Nor am I sorry to leave this impression behind me; it has a certain grim haughtiness about it, and in spite of some youthful lack of taste, exhibits a not unpleasant contempt for public opinion and ridicule.

Any one acquainted with the French character will readily acknowledge that the mere fact of showing one's self in a theatre where what it is the custom to call *tout Paris* is assembled, with hair as long as Albert Dürer's and a waistcoat as red as an Andalusian torero's muleta, calls for far more courage and strength of soul than is required by a man storming a redoubt bristling with death-dealing guns. For in every war numberless brave fellows perform that easy feat without having to be urged, while up to the present but one single Frenchman has been found daring enough to cover his breast with a piece of stuff of so aggressive, unusual, and dazzling a colour. Judging by the imperturbable disdain with which he affronted the glances of the audience, it was easy to see that, if he had been in the least degree egged on, he would have turned up at the second performance in a daffodil-yellow vest.

LEGEND OF THE RED WAISTCOAT

The utter amazement of the public and the persistence of an impression that ought not to have lasted beyond the close of the first act, must have been due less to the startling colour of the garment than to the heroic madness that thus exposed itself, with consummate coolness, to the sarcasm of the women, the pity of the old men, the contemptuous glances of the dandies, and the coarse laughter of the bourgeois.

I did try to tear off that waistcoat of Nessus that clung to my skin, and failing to do so I bravely put up with it in spite of the fancy of the bourgeois, who can never think of me as dressed in any other colour, in spite of the negrohead, bronze-green, maroon, iron-gray, soot-black, London-smoke, steel-gray, rotten-olive, bad-pickle, and other tasteful shades of overcoats in neutral tones, such as may be discovered, after long meditations, by a civilisation that has no sense of colour.

The case is the same with my hair. I have worn it cut short, but in vain, — it was always assumed to be long; and even had I exhibited in the orchestra stalls a hairless, ivory-coloured skull, shining like an ostrich's egg, people would still have maintained that great waves of Merovingian locks flowed down upon my

shoulders. Most ridiculous! So I have allowed the little I have to grow as it pleases, and it has turned the permission to account, the traitor, and given me a little bit the look of a Romanticist Absalom.

I stated at the outset of these reminiscences, how it was that I came to be recruited by Gérard into the company of "Hernani" in Rioult's studio, and how I was intrusted with the command of a small squad that answered to the password *Hierro*. That evening was to be, in my opinion, and rightly too, the greatest event of the age, since it was to inaugurate free, youthful, and new thought upon the débris of old routine; and I therefore wished to solemnise the occasion by a specially splendid dress, by an eccentric and gorgeous costume that should do honour to the Master, the school, and the play. At that time the painter student still prevailed in me over the poet, and I was much preoccupied with the interests of colour. As far as I was concerned the world was divided into flamboyants and dullards, the former the object of my love, the latter of my aversion. I wanted a return to life, light, movement, audacity in thought and execution, to the fair times of the Renaissance and real antiquity, so that I rejected the faint colouring, the thin, dry drawing,

and the compositions that looked like groups of lay figures, which the Empire had bequeathed to the Restoration.

These distinctions applied to literature also in my mind. Diderot was a flamboyant for me, Voltaire a dullard, just as Rubens and Poussin were similarly contrasted. But I had in addition a special taste, love for red. I adored that noble colour, now dishonoured by political fury, for it is purple, blood, life, light, and heat, and it harmonises admirably with gold and marble. It was therefore with genuine grief that I saw it disappearing from modern life and even from painting. Before 1789 a man might wear a scarlet mantle braided with gold, but now, in order to get a glimpse of the proscribed colour, I was reduced to watch the Swiss guards relieving sentries, or to look at the red coats of English fox-hunters in the windows of print-sellers. Did not "Hernani" offer a sublime opportunity to restore red to the position it should never have lost; and was it not proper that a young, lion-hearted painter student should declare himself the champion of Red, and flout the detested colour in the faces of the Grays, of that crowd of Classicists equally hostile to the splendours of poetry? These oxen, I

resolved, should behold red before their eyes, and should hear the verse of Hugo.

I do not intend to attempt to correct a legend, but I am bound to say that the waistcoat was, as a matter of fact, a doublet cut on the pattern of the Milanese globose breastplates and the Valois doublets, busked to a point on the stomach and ridged down the centre. I have been told that I possess a very full vocabulary, but I cannot find words to express the amazed look of my tailor when I described the kind of waistcoat I wanted. "He remained speechless," and Lebrun's studies in expression, at the page marked "Astonishment," have no faces with eyes wider open, eyebrows more uplifted, and more wrinkles at the top of the forehead, than the face of my worthy Gaulois — such was his name — at that moment. He thought me crazy, but respect prevented his giving voice to his feelings, out of deference to a family he thought highly of; he merely objected in a timid voice: —

"But that is not the fashion, sir."

"Well, it shall be the fashion, once I have worn it," I replied with a coolness worthy of Beau Brummel, Nash, Count d'Orsay, or any other celebrated dandy.

"I do not understand the cutting of it. It is more of a theatrical costume than a town suit, and I may make a mess of it."

"I am going to give you a pattern in gray linen, drawn, cut, and basted by myself. You can fit it. It hooks down the back like the waistcoats of the Saint-Simonians, but is in no wise symbolical."

"Very well, very well. My fellow-craftsmen will laugh at me, but I shall do what you want. Now, of what stuff is this precious garment to be made?"

I drew from a coffer a splendid piece of cherry or Chinese vermilion satin, and triumphantly unfolded it before my terrified tailor, with an air of calm satisfaction that revived his fears that I was out of my mind. The light shimmered and gleamed upon the folds of the stuff, which I rumpled in order to bring out the play of light and shade, making it run through the warmest, the richest, the most ardent, the most delicate shades of red. In order to avoid wearing the infamous red of '93, I had admitted a slight admixture of purple in the dye, for I was very desirous not to be suspected of any political intention. I was not an admirer of Saint-Just and Maximilian Robespierre, as were some of my comrades, who posed as the Mon-

tagnards of poetry, but I was rather a mediæval, steel-clad feudal baron, ready to intrench myself against the invasion of the age in the stronghold of Goetz von Berlichingen, as was proper in a page of the Victor Hugo of that day, who had also his tower in the Sierra.

In spite of the easily understood repugnance of worthy Gaulois, the doublet was duly made, was hooked behind, and, save for the fact that it was the only one of that cut and colour in the theatre, became me as well as a fashionable waistcoat. The rest of my dress consisted of trousers of a very light sea-green, with a black velvet band down the outer seam, a black coat with very broad velvet facings turned well back, and a full gray overcoat lined with green satin. Round my neck I wore a moiré ribbon, which answered the double purpose of a shirt collar and a necktie. I am bound to confess that this costume was well devised to irritate and scandalise the Philistines. Nor are you to imagine that I have improved on what the costume really was. My description is strictly accurate. In "Victor Hugo's Life told by an Eye-Witness" are these words: "The only eccentricity was in the costumes, and for that matter, it was sufficient to horrify the occupants of the boxes. People pointed

with horror to M. Théophile Gautier, whose flaming waistcoat blazed that evening above a pair of light gray trousers, with a black velvet stripe, and whose hair escaped from under the broad brim of a flat hat. The impassibility of his pale, regular features, and the coolness with which he looked at the respectable people in the boxes showed to what depths of abomination and desolation the drama had fallen."

Yea, verily, I did look at them with contempt, these larvæ of the past and of routine, at all those foes of art, of idealism, of liberty, and of poetry, who sought to close the gates of the future with their palsied hands, and in my heart burned fierce desire to scalp them with my tomahawk and to hang these trophies at my belt. In trying to do this, however, I should have run the risk of getting more wigs than heads of hair, for if the Classicist school gibed at the long hair of the modern school, it displayed, on the other hand, round the balconies of the Théâtre-Français a collection of bald heads comparable to the chaplet of skulls of the god Dourga. This fact was so self-evident that at the sight of these yellow skulls uprising from between the triangular shirt-collars, with flesh tones the colour of rancid butter, and malevolent in spite of their paternal

look, a young sculptor of much wit and talent, who has since become famous, and whose witticisms are as admirable as his statues, shouted amid the tumult: "Guillotine all those knee-caps!"

I must beg my reader to forgive my keeping them waiting so long upon the threshold of "Hernani," while I am talking of myself. It is not my custom to sin in this way, and if I knew how to abstract myself wholly from my work, I should do it. But the supernatural apparition, the fierce and meteoric flaming of my scarlet doublet on the horizon of Romanticism having been called "a sign of the times," to quote the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and having preoccupied this nineteenth century of ours that had surely something better to do, I have been compelled to do violence to my natural modesty and to bring myself forward for a moment, seeing that I it was who wore that wondrous doublet.

XI

FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "HERNANI"

FEBRUARY 25, 1830! That date stands out in my past in letters of fire; it is that of the first performance of "Hernani." That one evening moulded my whole life. It was then I felt the impulse which yet drives me on, though so many years have elapsed, and which will keep me going to the end of my career. Though much time has gone by, I still feel the same sensation of dazzling beauty; the enthusiasm of my youth has not waned, and whenever I hear the magic sound of the horn, I prick up my ears like an old war-horse ready to rush into battle again.

The young poet, with proud audacity and consciousness of genius, preferring, besides, glory to success, had obstinately refused the assistance of the paid cohorts that perform an accompaniment to a successful performance, and help out failures. These paid applauders

have a taste of their own, just like Academicians. Generally speaking they were Classicists, and they would have applauded Victor Hugo most unwillingly; their favourites at that time were Casimir Delavigne and Scribe, so that Hugo ran the risk, if matters went wrong, of being left in the lurch in the thick of the fight. There was talk of cabals, of intrigues secretly entered upon, almost of snares, even, prepared to kill the play and to get rid of the new school at one fell swoop. Literary hatred is fiercer by far than political hatred, for it sets in motion the most sensitive fibres of self-love, and the triumph of the adversary proclaims the other man a fool. Therefore the most respectable people in the world are ready to resort, in such cases, to any infamous tricks, big or little, without the least compunction.

Brave as Hernani might be, it would never do to leave him to fight the battle alone against a prejudiced and riotous pit, against boxes apparently more sedate, but no less dangerous under their politely concealed hostility, and whose sneers buzz most importunately under the hisses, more open, at least, in their attacks. The Romanticist youth, full of ardour and rendered fanatical by the preface to "Cromwell," resolved to

support "the mountain hawk," as Alarcon calls "The Weaver of Segovia." It offered its services to the Master, who accepted them. No doubt such a mass of fire and enthusiasm might prove dangerous, but timidity was not the weak point of that time. Small squads were enrolled in the band of supporters, each man bearing as a pass the square of red paper with the word *Hierro* inscribed upon it. All these details are well known, and I need not dwell upon them.

The smaller fry of the press of that day and polemical writers took pleasure in describing as a rabble of sordid roughs these young fellows, all of whom belonged to good families, who were well educated, well bred, crazy about art and poetry, some of them writers, some painters, some composers, others sculptors or architects or critics, or in some way busied with things literary. It was not Attila's filthy, fierce, unkempt, ignorant Huns that were encamped in front of the Théâtre-Français, but the knights of the future, the champions of thought, the defenders of the freedom of art; and they were handsome, free, and young. They had hair, — that goes without saying, for a man cannot be born with a wig on, — and plenty of hair, falling in soft and

shining curls, for they combed it carefully. Some wore small mustaches and others full beards; that is quite true, but this fashion became their clever, proud, bold faces, which the Renaissance masters would willingly have taken for models.

The "brigands of thought," as Philothée O'Neddy put it, did not, it must be owned, resemble your snug notary, but their costumes, marked by the expression of individual taste and due feeling for colour, lent themselves better to painting. Satin and velvet, braids and frogs and fur collars and cuffs were surely as good as the swallow-tailed coats, the short-waisted waistcoats of silk, the starched muslin cravats into which chins were sunk, and the corners of white linen shirt-collars that rose like blinders on either side of the gold-spectacled noses. Even the soft felt hat and the jacket of the young students not rich enough to realise their dreams of costumes after the fashion of Rubens and Velasquez, were more elegant than the stove-pipe hat and old dress-coat with rumpled folds of the old frequenters of the Comédie-Française, horrified at the invasion of these young Shakesperian barbarians.

Do not, therefore, believe a word of all the tales told of our company.

PERFORMANCE OF "HERNANI"

It would have been sufficient to admit our battalion an hour before the general public, but with perfidious intention, and no doubt in the hope that there would occur a row of some sort necessitating the interference of the police, the doors were opened at two in the afternoon, involving an eight hours' wait before the raising of the curtain. The auditorium was not lighted; theatres are dark by day and are illumined at night only. Evening is their dawn, and light penetrates in them only when it dies out of the heavens. This oversetting of things is in accord with their factitious life; while reality is at work, fiction sleeps.

Strange indeed is the aspect of the interior of a theatre during the day. The great height and size of the auditorium, increased by its emptiness, make one feel as if within a cathedral nave. The place is sunk in a faint darkness, into which fall, through an opening above or the pane in the door of a box, dim rays, a bluish light contrasting with the quivering red beams of the service lanterns scattered around in numbers sufficient, not to illumine, but to make the darkness visible. A visionary's eye, like that of Hoffmann, would easily see in it the setting of a fantastic tale. I had never been in a theatre by day, and when our company burst

in, like a flood pouring through a broken dam, I was struck by this Piranesi-like effect.

We piled in as comfortably as we could on the uppermost seats, in the dark corners of the gods, on the rear seats of the balconies, in every suspicious and dangerous recess where might post themselves owners of shrill-toned keys, maddened *claqueurs*, starched wiseacres in love with Campistron and fearing a massacre of the busts by us *septembriseurs* of a new sort. We were scarcely more comfortable than Don Carlos would presently be within the cupboard, but the worst places had been reserved for the most enthusiastic, just as in war the most perilous posts are given to the reckless fellows who love to plunge into the thick of danger. The others, not less trusty, but more sedate, occupied the pit, drawn up in order under the eye of their leaders and ready to fall as one man upon the Philistines at the least sign of hostility on their part.

Six to seven hours waiting in the dark, or at least in the half-darkness of a theatre in which the great chandelier has not been lighted, is pretty long, even when after the darkness "Hernani" is to rise like the sun in his glory.

PERFORMANCE OF "HERNANI"

We began talking about the play and what we knew of it. Some of us, who were more intimate with the Master, had heard him read portions of it, and remembered a few lines, which they quoted and which awoke the liveliest enthusiasm. A new "Cid" was to appear in this play, the work of a young Corneille, no less proud, no less haughty and Castilian than the first, but who had turned to Shakespeare. The various names that ought to have been given to the play were discussed. Some regretted that the name of "Three for One," had not been retained, for it struck them as a genuine Calderon title, a cloak and sword appellation, thoroughly Spanish and Romanticist, in the style of "Life is a Dream," and "April and May Morns." Others rightly considered that the title, or rather subtitle, of the play, "Castilian Honour," was more serious. Most preferred "Hernani" alone, and it is their view that eventually prevailed, for it is the name that the drama has since been known by, and which, to use a Homeric expression, flits, a winged name, upon the lips of men.

Ten years later I was travelling through Spain. Between Astigarraga and Tolosa, we traversed, at the top speed of our mules, a village half ruined in the course

of the war between the Christinos and the Carlists. Through the darkness I could make out the walls with great coats of arms carved above the doors and black windows with complicated iron-work, gratings, and rich balconies, testifying to bygone splendour. I asked the zagal who was running by the side of the carriage, his hand resting upon the sharp backbone of the off mule, the name of the village, and he answered, "Ernani." On hearing these three syllables, so full of memories, the drowsiness that had come over me, after a fatiguing day, vanished at once, and through the incessant tinkling of the mules' bells there sounded like a far-away sigh the faint blast of Hernani's horn. I saw again in a flash the proud mountaineer in his buff jerkin, his green sleeves, and his red hose; Don Carlos, in gilded armour; Dona Sol, pale and robed in white; Ruy Gomez de Silva standing before the portraits of his ancestors, — in a word, the whole of the play. I even seemed to hear the row that went on at the first performance.

When Victor Hugo, still a child, returned from Spain to France after the fall of King Joseph, he must have traversed this place, the aspect of which is unchanged, and heard a postilion speak that strange, high-sounding

name, so well suited to verse, and which, ripening later in his brain, like a seed forgotten in a corner, bloomed out into the magnificent drama.

We were beginning to feel hungry. The most prudent among us had brought chocolate and rolls; some, with bated breath be it spoken, saveloys; evil-minded Classicists maintain these were flavoured with garlic. I do not believe they were, but had they been garlic is classical, for in Vergil Thestylis crushed garlic for the harvesters. The meal finished, a few ballads of Hugo's were sung, and then some of those endless studio rigmaroles that, like a water-wheel with its buckets, incessantly bring in the refrain with the same old piece of nonsense in it; next we indulged in imitations of the cries of the various animals in the Ark, which their descendants in the Zoölogical Gardens would have considered faultless. Innocent practical jokes, such as are loved of young painter students were got off; the heads, or rather the scalps of a few Academicians were called for; dreams from classical tragedies were recited, and all sorts of liberties taken with the good old goddess Melpomene, who, little accustomed to having her marble peplum rumpled in this fashion, must have felt no end of astonishment at it.

Meantime the great chandelier was slowly being lowered from the ceiling with its triple row of gas-jets and its prismatic scintillations. The footlights were being lighted and drew between the world of reality and the world of fiction a luminous line of demarcation. The candelabra began to flame out in the stage-boxes, and the place was gradually filling up. The doors of the boxes opened and closed noisily. The ladies, who were installing themselves as for a prolonged sitting, easing their shoulders out of their low-necked dresses and settling themselves in their skirts, laid their bouquets and their glasses on the velvet-covered rail. Although our school has been reproached with the love of the ugly, I am bound to say that the handsome, young, and pretty women were warmly cheered by our passionate youthful band, a performance which the old and ugly of their sex looked upon as shockingly improper and in the worst of taste. Those we cheered hid their faces behind their bouquets with a forgiving smile.

The orchestra stalls and the balcony were paved with academical and Classicist bald-heads. A stormy rumour made itself heard in the theatre; it was time the curtain went up. We might have come to blows before

the play began, so great was the animosity between the two parties. At last the three knocks were heard. The curtain rose slowly, and in a small sixteenth-century bed-chamber, lighted by a small lamp, was seen the elderly Doña Josefa Duarte, the bodice of her dress embroidered with jet, in the fashion of the times of Isabella the Catholic, listening for the rap at the secret door by which is to enter the lover awaited by her mistress.

> " Serait-ce déjà lui ? — C'est bien à l'escalier
> Dérobé — "
>
> (Can it be he? —It is surely at the private
> Door —)

The fight was on. That word summarily chucked into the next line, that audacious overflow, impertinent even, was like a professional swashbuckler, a Saltabadil, a Scoronconcolo smacking the face of Classicism and challenging it to a duel.

XII

"HERNANI"

WHAT! With the very first words the orgy is already in full swing! Verse is smashed up and the pieces thrown from the windows!" said a Classicist admirer of Voltaire, with the indulgent smile of wisdom beholding folly.

He was a tolerant man, after all, and would not have objected to prudent innovations provided the French tongue had been respected, but such carelessness at the very outset had to be condemned in a poet, no matter what his principles, whether Liberal or Royalist, might be.

"It is not a piece of carelessness, it is a beauty," replied a Romanticist from Devéria's studio, tawny as Cordova leather and with a shock of thick red hair like a figure in Giorgione's paintings.

"'C'est bien à l'escalier
Dérobé.'

"Do you not see that the word *dérobé*, removed and as it were suspended beyond the line, describes admirably the stair of love and mystery that winds in the thickness of the manor wall? It is marvellously architectonic, full of sixteenth-century feeling, and reveals the deepest acquaintance with a whole vanished civilisation."

Devéria's ingenious pupil no doubt saw too many things in that overflow, for his remarks, carried to excessive length, aroused calls for order and requests that he should be put out, the growing earnestness of which soon reduced him to silence.

It would be a difficult task to describe the effect produced upon the audience by the striking, virile, vigorous verse, that had so strange a ring, and a swing that recalled at once both Corneille and Shakespeare, for nowadays the very innovations that then were considered barbarisms are accounted classical. It must also be carefully borne in mind that in France, at that time, abhorrence of plain speaking and of the use of crude words was carried to a fairly unimaginable extent. And with the best will in the world, all one can do now is to conceive of this abhorrence from an historical point of view, as is done concerning certain

motives or prejudices the very causes of which have disappeared.

To-day, when witnessing a performance of "Hernani," and following the play of the actors upon an early copy of the piece, marked on the margins with the thumb-nail to indicate the parts at which the tumult broke out, or where the performance was interrupted or the work hissed, and which are the very passages that now provoke outbursts of applause, — passages that were then fields of battle well trampled over, redoubts that were stormed and retaken, ambushes where one lay in wait round the corner of an epithet, relays of hounds ready to spring at the throat of a hunted metaphor, — it is impossible not to experience a sensation of surprise which the present generation, for ever freed from all that nonsense by the valiant efforts we put forth in times of old, can never fully share.

How can one explain, for instance, that this line, —

"Est-il minuit ? — Minuit bientôt"
(Is it midnight ? — It is about to strike), —

should have raised a storm and that the battle raged for three days around that hemistich ? It was adjudged to

be trivial, familiar, improper. Behold a king asking what time it is in the language of a commoner, and answered as though he were a clodhopper! Serve him right! If he had used a fine periphrasis, he would have been replied to politely, somewhat in this fashion: —

"— l'heure
Atteindra bientôt sa dernière demeure."

(— the time
Will soon have reached its latest hour.)

Not only was plain speaking objected to in verse, the public also kicked against epithets, metaphors, comparisons, poetic expressions, — in a word, and to put it briefly, against lyricism, with its rapid flights to nature, the uplifting of the soul above prosaic situations, the flashing of poetry in the drama, so frequent in Shakespeare, Calderon, and Goethe, and so rare in our great masters of the seventeenth century that in the whole drama of that period there are but two picturesque verses, the one in Corneille, the other in Molière; the first in the "Cid," the second in the remarks of Orgon, just returned from the country and warming his hands before the fire. Corneille's line is a splendid bit of padding, wrought by powerful hands out of

the cedar of the celestial abodes in order to furnish the rime to "voiles" which he needed: —

"Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles."
(The dusky light of the stars of night.)

Molière's line —

"La campagne à présent n'est pas beaucoup fleurie"
(But few blooms now are in the meadows strewn) —

expresses a feeling of commonplace comfort and the satisfaction of no longer being exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather, though it also reminds one, in that sombre Parisian home, in which tortuous intrigue writhes like a snake, that out in the country there is yet greenery, and that man is ever surrounded by nature, even though he scarcely ever glances at it.

This novel spectacle interested the evil-wishers. They followed closely the action of the play, so vigorously initiated, and more than once they renounced the pleasure of interrupting or expressing disapprobation, for the pleasure of listening. There were moments when the poet's genius mastered the love of routine and the malevolent instincts of the crowd, which rebels against any new ascendency and is apt to think that it admires quite enough men as it is.

In spite of the terror inspired by Hugo's partisans, who were scattered about in small parties and who were easily recognised by their peculiar costumes and their fierce looks, there sounded in the theatre the low roar of the excited crowd, which is no more to be stilled than the roar of the sea. The wrought up feelings of an audience always burst out and manifest themselves by unmistakable signs. It needed only to cast a glance at the public to learn that this was no ordinary performance; that two systems, two parties, two armies, two civilisations — it is no exaggeration to put it so — were facing each other, filled with cordial reciprocal hatred of the intense literary kind, ready to come to blows and longing for a fight. The general attitude was one of hostility; elbows were stuck out, the least friction would have sufficed to cause an outbreak, and it was easy to see that the long-haired youth considered the clean-shaven gentleman an atrocious idiot, and would not long refrain from giving expression to his private opinions.

In point of fact, minor rows, speedily suppressed, broke out when Don Carlos indulged in some of his Romanticist pleasantries, when Don Ruy Gomez de Silva swore by Saint John of Avila, and when were

noted certain touches of Spanish local colour borrowed from the "Romancero" for the sake of greater accuracy. But it was plain that the mingling of familiarity and grandeur, of heroism and passion and moodishness in Hernani, and of Homeric tautology in old Silva, aroused the deepest resentment among that portion of the audience that did not form part of Hugo's *salteadores*.

The *De ta suite — j'en suis!* (In thy train! — I am indeed!) which ends the first act became, I need not say, a theme for endless jokes on the part of the numerous tribe of the clean-shaven; but the lines in the monologue are so fine that even when repeated by these idiots they remained wonderful.

Mlle. Gay, who was later Mme. Delphine de Girardin, and who even then was famous as a poet, attracted universal attention by her blonde beauty. She had naturally the pose and the dress she has in the well-known portrait of her that Hersent painted: a white dress, blue scarf, long golden curls, her arm bent, and one finger pressed against her cheek in an attitude of attentive admiration. She was a Muse who seemed to be intently listening to Apollo. Lamartine and Victor Hugo were great friends of hers; she worshipped their

genius to the last, and only when cold in death did her lovely hand drop the censer. On that evening, on that forever memorable first performance of "Hernani," she applauded — like the veriest student, in his place before two o'clock, thanks to his red card — the shocking beauties, the revolting traits of genius.

THE REVIVAL OF "HERNANI"

(June 21, 1867)

IT is thirty-seven years ago that, thanks to the square of red paper stamped with the word *Hierro*, I entered the Théâtre-Français long before the hour at which the performance was to begin, in the company of young poets, young painters, young sculptors — we were all young then! — enthusiastic, filled with faith, and resolved to conquer or die in the great literary battle about to be fought out. It was February 25, 1830, the day of "Hernani," a date that no Romanticist has forgotten and that the Classicists perhaps remember, for the fight was waged bitterly by both parties. Happy days, indeed, when intellectual matters could so highly excite the masses!

Nor was the emotion I felt last Thursday any less deep. Thirty-seven years! Twice as much as the span that Tacitus calls "a great space in human life." Alas! of the old Romanticist battalions but few veterans are left; the survivors, however, were present,

and it was with melancholy pleasure that I recognised them in the stalls or the boxes, and that I thought of the trusty comrades long since dead. True, "Hernani" no longer needs its veteran guard, for no one thinks nowadays of attacking it. The public has followed the example set by Don Carlos; it has forgiven the rebel and restored all his titles. Hernani is now John of Aragon, grand master of Avis, Duke of Segorba and Duke of Cardona, Marquis of Monroy, Count Albatera; Donna Sol's arms cling round his neck above the collar of the Golden Fleece, and but for the imprudent pact entered into with Ruy Gomez, he would be perfectly happy.

But it was not so of yore, and night after night Hernani had to blow his horn to summon his mountain hawks, that not infrequently bore away in their talons a Classicist scalp as a token of victory. Certain lines were stormed and restormed like redoubts that two armies fight for with equal obstinacy. One evening the Romanticists triumphed with a passage that the enemy captured the next night, and from which it had to be driven. What a din there was! What shouts! What hoots! What hisses! What bursts of bravos! What thunders of applause! The leaders of the con-

tending parties insulted each other like the heroes of Homer before they came to blows, and at times, I am bound to confess, they were not more courteous than Achilles and Agamemnon. But the winged words flew up to the top of the house and attention was quickly recalled to the stage.

We would come out at the close of the performance worn out and breathless; elated when the evening had been a fortunate one for us, cursing the Philistines when we had suffered a reverse; and until every man had regained his home, the echoes of night gave back fragments of Hernani's monologue or of Don Carlos'; for one and all we knew the play by heart, and even now, if need were, I could do the prompting from memory.

To the generation of that day "Hernani" was what the "Cid" had been to Corneille's contemporaries. Whoever was young, valiant, in love, or poetical, was filled with the breath of it. The fine heroical and Castilian exaggeration, the splendid Spanish pomposity, the language at once so proud and haughty in its familiarity, the images so dazzlingly strange intoxicated us, made us ecstatic, and turned our heads with their entrancing poetry. Undoubtedly the author of "Hernani" has written plays as beautiful, as complete, and

perhaps even more dramatic than that one, but none of them fascinated us to such an extent.

But there, like Nestor, the good knight of Gerennia, I am, though I have not reached his age, telling stories and informing the men of to-day of what the men of yore were. Let us, as is proper, leave the past for the present, and return to last Thursday's performance. The hall was filled by as large and as interested an audience as on February 25, 1830, but there was no longer any antagonism between Romanticists and Classicists; the two parties had fused into one, and applauded together without the least discord arising between them. The passages that had formerly excited opposition were, with delicate attention, especially applauded, as if to compensate the poet for the injustice done him of yore. Time has gone by, the public has become educated little by little, and the very things that revolted it before, now are taken as a matter of course. The supposed defects have turned into beauties, and men are surprised to find themselves shedding tears over passages they laughed at, and becoming enthusiastic over others that they once hissed. The prophet did not go to the mountain, but, contrary to the Islamic legend, the mountain drew near to him.

With the lapse of time the work itself has gained a magnificent patina, the violent colouring has toned down, the harsh touches have become softened, and the fierce impasto has disappeared as under a golden varnish that softens and warms at one and the same time. It exhibits the sober richness, the masterly and broad touch seen in those portraits by Titian in which the painter to Charles V has depicted a great personage, with his coat of arms in one corner of the canvas.

In his preface to the play, the author, speaking of himself, said: "He [the author] dare not flatter himself that every one understood at the first attempt the drama itself, the real key to which is the 'Romancero general.' He begs those who have been shocked by his work to re-read the 'Cid,' 'Don Sancho of Aragon,' 'Nicomedes,' or rather the whole of Corneille and Molière, the great and admirable poets. This, after allowing for the vast inferiority of the author of 'Hernani,' may cause them to be less severe towards certain things, either in the matter or form of the drama, which may have offended them."

These few lines contain the secret of the Romanticist style, derived from Corneille, Molière, and Saint-Simon, with some touches of Shakespeare in the matter

of images. Racine alone appears classical to the refined people who, as a general rule, do not much care for the virile poets and the vigorous prose-writer I have just named. It is that form of speech which they dislike in modern poets in general, and in Hugo in particular.

It gives one the liveliest pleasure to see, after having had to endure so many melodramas and vaudevilles, this work of genius, with its characters larger than life, its mighty passions, its mad lyricism, and its action which seems to be a legend drawn from the "Romancero" and put upon the stage like that of the Cid Campeador. And especially is it delightful to listen to that beautiful, richly coloured verse, so poetic, so firm and yielding, lending itself to the rapid familiarity of the dialogue, in the course of which the retorts cross like sword-blades and strike fire, or again soaring with the wings of an eagle or a dove in moments of reverie and of love.

As the great monologue of Don Carlos before the tomb of Charlemagne was being spoken, I seemed to be ascending a stair, every step of which was a verse, leading to the top of a cathedral spire, from which the world appeared to me as in a Gothic woodcut of a

cosmography, with pointed steeples, crenelated towers, palaces, garden walls, carved roofs, zig-zagging ramparts, bombards set on their carriages, spirals of smoke, and in the background a swarming population. The poet excels in such lofty, wide views of the ideas, the appearance, or the politics of an epoch.

The play, entitled "Hernani, or Castilian honour," has for a fate *el pundonor*, the *ananke* of so many Spanish comedies. John of Aragon yields to it, but not without regret; life is so sweet to him when he hears the sound of the horn that recalls the forgotten oath; and he dies with Donna Sol rather than he redeems his pledge. But there, my old habit of analysis is running away with me again, and I am telling the story of "Hernani."

Romanticist Studies

Romanticist Studies

EUGÈNE DEVÉRIA

Born in 1805 — Died in 1865

NASCENT Romanticism built the highest hopes upon Eugène Devéria. Darkness and forgetfulness have long since fallen upon his fame, which arose in a blaze of splendour, admiration, and enthusiasm. No man ever started so brilliantly or held out fairer promise. When he exhibited his "Birth of Henry IV" the French had every reason to believe that they were about to have a Paolo Veronese of their own, and that a great colourist was born unto them. The artist who thus made himself known by a masterpiece was scarcely twenty-two; he was born in 1805, and his painting bears the date 1827. Everything might be expected from so well endowed a painter, but his fine rush soon slackened; his inspiration was deadened by some mysterious influence, the expected masterpieces did not materialise, and the present generation cannot,

therefore, imagine how important was the part played by Eugène Devéria in his own day.

He was then a tall, handsome, athletic young fellow with proud, bold look. He wore his hair cropped short, fiercely curled mustaches, and a long, pointed beard, the terror of the shaven bourgeois. Beards, so generally worn nowadays, were then still considered ferocious, barbarous, and monstrous. But Romanticist painters were not in the least anxious to look like smug lawyers, and strove by every means in their power to present the strongest possible contrast to the Philistines. No Venetian of the sixteenth century was fonder of gorgeousness in dress than Eugène Devéria; he loved satins, damask, and gems, and would gladly have gone about in a brocade gown like one of the magnificoes in the paintings of Titian or Bonifazio. As he could not quite wear the costume that became his talent, he did his best to modify the hideous modern male attire. He wore coats cut well open and turned back over the shoulders, with broad shimmering velvet facings, and the chest well brought out by waistcoats cut after the fashion of a doublet. His hats were made after the pattern of Rubens'. Large rings, set with engraved stones, and huge signet-rings

shone on his fingers, and when he went forth into the streets, he gave the finishing touch to his picturesque eccentricity by draping himself in a full Spanish mantle. Such a fantastic costume would appear strange at the present day, but at that time it was considered quite a natural thing for a man to indulge in. The name of "artist" covered a multitude of sins, and every one, whether painter, poet, or sculptor did as he pleased.

Eugène Devéria's studio was situated in the Rue de l'Est, in Petitot's house, where lived also Cartellier the sculptor. Devéria shared his studio with Louis Boulanger, who was finishing his "Mazeppa" while Devéria was working at his "Birth of Henry IV." These two paintings, which were epoch-making, as among the first to carry out the theories of Romanticism, were fraternally elaborated under the same roof, but Eugène Devéria lived with his family in the Rue-Notre-Dame-des-Champs, close by Victor Hugo, in whose abode met the society that has since received the name of Cænaculum. At that time painters and poets associated a great deal and formed a mutual admiration society. Although the precept *Ut pictura poesis* was classical, the new school adopted it, and there is no doubt that every man profited by being familiar with

both these forms of art. Eugène Devéria, like Louis Boulanger, was a man of letters; he wrote prettily in verse, and was well fitted to understand the great literary revolution promoted by the author of "Odes and Ballads." At the tumultuous performances of "Hernani," to which he led a company of artists and students, he distinguished himself by the petulant warmth of his applause, and as long as the fight went on he took part in all the battles of the new school. Romanticism was at home at the Devérias', as was the saying in those days, and correctly, for there were two of them, Achille and Eugène. Achille was the elder, and had not the necessities of life compelled him to turn out work incessantly, he would certainly have left a great reputation behind him, for he was no less able than his brother. In the enormous number of his works, which will be greatly sought after by and by, and which comprise lithographs, vignettes, portraits, compositions of all kinds, the drawing is always free, flowing, personal, and marked by a Florentine elegance that denotes much skill. The whole period lives again in them, with its characteristic fashions, ways, affectations, and eccentricities. The Devéria house, therefore, was one of the foci of Romanticism, and

there were to be met Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Musset, Fontaney, David d'Angers, Planche, Louis Boulanger, Abel Hugo, Paul Foucher, Petrus Borel, Pacini, Plantade, and many another, besides the great Master himself, who often put in an appearance.

Eugène Devéria was Girodet's pupil, though one would scarcely believe it; yet Eugène Delacroix had Guérin for master, and who would believe that? The "Birth of Henry IV" no more recalls "Atala and Chactas" than "Dante's Skiff" recalls "Marcus Sextus."

Now that the revolution is ended it is difficult to understand the effect produced by the paintings of these two young masters, the one so brilliant, the other so strong in colour; the one so bright, the other so harshly sombre, and both contrasting with the paler and paler copies of David's dying school. It is well, therefore, to replace these works in the surroundings amid which they first appeared, in order to judge of their relative as well as of their absolute value.

Delacroix was the winner; he was more energetic, more persistent, and his genius was the more complex. Eugène Devéria never surpassed his first effort, and his first attempt remained his masterpiece.

No doubt there are brilliant qualities, pleasant colouring, and prodigious facility in his "Puget showing a group to Louis XIV;" in the decoration of the chapel of Saint Geneviève in the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette; in his "Louis-Philippe in the Chamber of Deputies;" in his "Mary Stuart" on the scaffold, listening to the reading of her sentence of death; in the "Chapel of the Doms" at Avignon; but it is no longer the splendid solid Venetian colouring and the masterly handling that won fame for the artist and that will make him be remembered among the celebrities of the age. For a man's name may live in a picture as in a book; happy he, therefore, who has made a masterpiece, even if it be unique!

As I mistrusted my youthful impressions which made me think of the "Birth of Henry IV" in its fresh and novel splendour, adorned with all the witchery of colour, after the long dearth of it to which the pseudo-Classical school had condemned all men, I went to the Luxembourg, where it is hung, to look at the painting which, in 1827, struck me as so marvellous. It has perfectly stood the test of time. The patina of years has harmonised its warm, luminous colour, and to-day, as of yore, I admired the composition so cleverly

grouped in pyramidal form, the relation of the tones, the flowing, abundant matter, the true feeling for decorative painting, the lovely female heads, the dwarf carrying a parrot, and the great hound that seems to have escaped out of a painting by Paolo Veronese.

The work is painted in thick impasto, with masterly boldness, certainty, and facility. The figures are well connected together, either by a gesture or by a similarity of tone; the backgrounds are dark or light, as logic demands, behind the personages, and the whole aspect attracts by a unity which is becoming more and more rare. The "Birth of Henry IV" is no mere patchwork of parts studied out separately and then assembled anyhow, but a picture in which everything is connected, and which has been painted with the same colours and the same brush. I believe that when the prescribed time has elapsed, it will hold its place gloriously in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, the Tribuna of the French school and thus preserve from oblivion the once resounding name of Eugène Devéria.

LOUIS BOULANGER

Born in 1806 — Died in 1867

LOUIS BOULANGER was professor in the Dijon Art School, a post occupied for a time by Ziegler. He is another of the valiant privates of the Romanticist army who have fallen far from the field of battle — for, alas! the days of glorious combats are over — and who have died almost unnoticed after having blazed at their beginnings in the splendour of lightnings and beams. In those old days poets and painters lived familiarly together, and the two arts profited by continual exchange of ideas. At times the poet handled the brush, and the painter the pen. Literature was discussed in the studio, and painting in the study. Louis Boulanger was at one and the same time an artist and a man of letters, and the new school had no more fervent adherent. Every one believed that he was destined to have a brilliant future, and his splendid success at the outset justified the highest hopes.

His first painting, "Mazeppa," had won a great

triumph. It was a fiery piece of work, full of boldness and dash, splendid in colour, painted in a fashion that was inspired by Rubens and Titian, and that dazzled eyes accustomed to the dulness of the Classical school. He had also produced two large lithographs, no doubt hard to find now, the one representing the "Massacre of Saint Bartholomew" and the other "The Witches' Dance," drawn from the famous ballad. The historical scene was quite as strange and fantastic as the legendary one, but in both were to be noted the transformation of reality into chimera, and the knowledge of nocturnal terror, which are to be met with in Goya's "Caprices" only. "The Death of Bailly," a huge painting, singular in composition and grim in execution, was less suited, on account of the modern subject, to Boulanger's mediæval talent, and gave rise to violent criticism. It was charged with being hideous and monstrous, and in vain did I reply, like Macbeth's witches, "The horrible is beautiful, the beautiful is horrible;" the picture did not meet with the success of "Mazeppa." It is true that the artist had bestowed atrocious faces upon Bailly's executioners.

Devéria, Boulanger, and Delacroix were then equally famous, but Delacroix alone kept on his way to the

end; Boulanger, later on, began to doubt whether he had taken the right road, and retraced his steps as if in search of another.

He had one very uncommon defect; he carried admiration to excess. He admired the masters so passionately that he forgot his own individuality; he spent long hours in contemplating, copying, and talking of their works. Now it was Rubens, now Veronese, and now Titian; again, he crossed the Pyrenees and turned to Velasquez and Goya. The works of art rather hid the works of nature from him. But, on the other hand, he exhibited the most marvellous delicacy of tact, feeling, and intelligence when dealing with a picture or a poem. It was worth seeing him enjoy its beauties, and marking his sincere and luminous delight in a thing of beauty.

People have been somewhat unjust towards Boulanger; he may have admired too much, but he himself has not been sufficiently admired; yet "Petrarca's Triumph," was a magnificent work, and the artist deserved some of the roses cast by the maidens in front of the poet's car. "Rinaldo in Armida's Garden," "Camacho's Wedding Feast," and the paintings in the dining-room of Mme. Malher, the

sister of the famous goldsmith were, after all, marvels of grace and colouring.

For a brief moment Boulanger suffered from the disease of style, a trouble that is apt to overtake painters at the critical age and to make them blush for their youthful audacities, but a trip to Spain, when I had the pleasure of spending a few days with him, had brought him back to the right path and to the sound doctrines of Romanticism. "The Court of Miracles" and the "Gipsy Festival," exhibited in the last Salon, showed that he was still the same Louis Boulanger as in 1830. He was besides a charming talker, a delicate poet, and a clever linguist; he spoke the purest Castilian. When he died I lost one of the pleasantest companions of my younger days.

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU

Born in 1812 — Died in 1867

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU belonged to that splendid generation of 1830 which made its mark upon the future and which will be spoken of as one of the climacteric epochs of the human mind. It was as though tongues of fire had come down from heaven, on one and the same day, upon the heads of the privileged ones. Great was the ardour, great the enthusiasm, great the love of art, and equally fierce the hatred of vulgarity and the contempt for success purchased at the cost of concessions to the lack of taste of the bourgeois. Every one threw himself into the work with the most intense individuality and the maximum of effort. Every man wrought for all he was worth and cared little if he paid for success with his life, provided he attained his end. Art was being renewed in every part: poetry, the novel, the drama, painting, music gave birth to unnumbered masterpieces. Cabat had discovered nature without travelling far afield; the Beaujon Gardens, the Mont-

souris Tavern, the Duck Pond, the Moulin de la Galette had sufficed for his purpose. Flers, Cabat's master, had discovered lovely landscapes in the environs of Aumale. Théodore Rousseau, after having drawn inspiration from the hills of Sèvres and Meudon, had adventured into Fontainebleau Forest, then almost unknown, and had pitched his tent there, painting the trees, the rocks, the sky, just as if Bertin, Ridault, Watelet, and Michallon had never existed; painting trees that were not historical, rocks wherein no nymph Echo sought refuge, and skies untraversed by Venus on her car. He reproduced what he saw as it was, with its aspect, its drawing, its colour, the relation between the tones, simply, sincerely, lovingly, quite unaware that he was almost madly audacious, and that he would be taken for a barbarian, a visionary, a madman.

The privilege of truth, when it exhibits itself in its healthy nudity amid our vain appearances and our specious falsehoods, is to be considered indecent, and men straightway seek to drive it back into its well. Having once been permitted to exhibit in the salon, under a misapprehension, no doubt, Rousseau was systematically excluded from it for years. The Institute seemed to dread that this rank revolutionist would

turn society topsy-turvy. Every time his pictures were refused by the Hanging Committee, the junior press of the day broke out into howls, insults, and diatribes against the jury, which it is impossible to give any idea of. Amazing were the outrageous epithets and metaphors! I myself displayed towards these unfortunate judges a ferocity that causes me to smile to-day when by chance I come across these virulent pages, the obligatory accompaniment to the opening of every Salon in those days. It may be that the form was exaggerated, but I was right to defend liberty in art. Meanwhile Rousseau, without allowing himself to be discouraged, went on studying nature; he would surprise her in the morning, ere she was fully clothed and when she thought no one was looking at her; he watched her taking her midday siesta, and especially at even, in the gloaming, when she was about to fall asleep. He did not even leave her after night had fallen, and sought her out in those mysterious hours in the semi-transparency of the darkness. With the help of these studies, he painted bold, strong, original pictures, adding, like every great artist, his own soul to nature's. A few friends alone were acquainted with these works, which perforce long remained in his

studio, lowly and dusty, their faces to the wall, as if seeking to conceal their shame.

Fortunately there were then young fellows possessed of enthusiasm and admiration, who fell in love with a man's talent and devoted himself to his cause with a sort of fanaticism. They let slip no opportunity of singing the praises of their god, often unknown, of defending him and proclaiming him superior to all others, even going to the length of insulting his opponents, and howling against the injustice of hanging committees and the stupidity of the age. Wherever these peripatetic æsthetes met, whether on the Boulevard, in studios, or in drawing-rooms, they enlisted neophytes in their train and led them mysteriously to gaze upon the rejected masterpiece. It was in this way that I first beheld Théodore Rousseau's "The Chestnut-tree Walk." It will easily be understood that this strong, firm, vigorous and fresh painting, filled with the very life of nature and the breath of the heavens, produced a deep impression upon me. The lapse of thirty years has not diminished the remembrance of my surprise, and it was renewed when I again saw the picture, now become famous, at Khalil Bey's. It is a great satisfaction to me, in my mature years, not to have to renounce

any of the things I admired in my youth: what I then thought beautiful is beautiful still, and probably will always be so, for, in the case of many of those I have loved, posterity has already rendered its judgment. If life has not fulfilled all the promises it held out, art at least, let me do it the justice to say so, has never deceived me. Not one of the gods I worshipped has turned out to be a false god, and I may go on burning before them the incense they deserve. But alas! it is too often upon the fire of a funeral pyre that I have to cast my incense.

A landscape painter's pictures do not bear, like those of an historical painter, distinctive names. Landscape, as Rousseau conceived it, includes neither anecdotes nor historical facts; figures appear in it merely as pleasant spots of colour, and have no greater importance than they really have in nature itself, in which man disappears so swiftly. Unless in the case of some peculiarity in the scene chosen, the best title for a landscape is, after all, "Landscape" itself, and for that reason I am unable to mention Théodore Rousseau's chief works, though it was easy to do so in the case of Ingres. But posterity will find names for them, as it has done for the landscapes of Ruysdaël and Hobbema.

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU

Unlike most painters, who adopt a certain manner soon as easily recognisable as a man's handwriting, Rousseau is exceedingly varied. He employs every means of getting at the truth: sometimes he uses impasto, sometimes he rubs thinly; now he works with as much dash as if he were making a rapid sketch, now he finishes his work minutely; at one moment he chooses a scene that he presents at a certain hour, under an almost fantastic aspect, such as nature's assiduous observers often note; at another he will reproduce in simplest fashion a flat piece of country traversed by a farm road and diversified with a few poplars; or else he plunges into his favourite forest and takes an oak, of which he makes a portrait just as if it were that of an emperor or a god or a hero. Majestic and mighty still is that veteran of the forest, that monarch of the grove, worthy of being sung by Laprade, around whom have fallen the ages like the yellow leaves of autumn! At Dodona it would have uttered sacred oracles; in the Druidical wood it would have furnished a golden-sickle-bearing Velleda with mistletoe. The intense colouring of this masterpiece has already acquired the polish of agate, as experts and connoisseurs put it, and hereafter will change no more than would the colouring of a mosaic.

ROMANTICIST STUDIES

Although deeply original and drawing his inspiration directly from nature, Theodore Rousseau belonged to one of the families in art; he was distantly related to Gainsborough, Constable, and especially to that painter, little known on the Continent, whom the English call Old Crome. Rousseau drew well and carefully, but it is chiefly upon his colour that his fame will rest. As an [illegible] grows old, he is apt to suffer from the disease [illegible] and to judge his own youthful work severely; [illegible] thanks to his incessant familiarity [illegible] to his own robust temperament, hap- [illegible] through that regrettable crisis, remained [illegible] and admired, without seeking to imitate [illegible] landscapes of Poussin. Rousseau [illegible] be said to be the Delacroix of landscape painting, there being between them one of those secret analogies that [illegible] though they cannot well be expressed.

I must [illegible] to recall a personal recol- [illegible] long [illegible] from persecution, [illegible] as he was called, had [illegible] Hanging Committee, [illegible] the transformation

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[illegible] and [illegible] former

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culprit, the convict of other days, had in his turn taken his seat on the judges' bench. I need not say what religious care, what sustained attention, what comprehensive indulgence marked his discharge of these delicate functions, the difficulty of which one can appreciate only after having performed them; and when some queer, extraordinary work, abnormal in conception or execution, was submitted to us, Rousseau, before the verdict of condemnation was pronounced, would say to those of the veterans of 1830 who, like himself, had now become members of the committee: "Let us take care, gentlemen; it may be that we are now only Romanticist fossils, Classicists of a sort."

At one of these meetings, the last one, we came out together. The recluse landscape-painter was a remarkable conversationalist, who spoke well on every subject and especially upon his own art. His old inextinguishable ardour rendered him insensible to fatigue, and after a lifetime of work that broke down the youngest, he was still bright, strong, ready to discuss theories, paradoxes, and æsthetics. We were crossing slowly the gardens in which Ledoyen has installed his kitchen, in an effective Pompeian villa, of which we caught a glimpse illumined by a sunbeam through clumps of

verdure. A tree that sprang boldly into the air, its column-like bole half hidden by ivy, struck me and I drew the great artist's attention to it. I thought the tree had an elegance of its own, a worldly and fashionable elegance, so to speak; for there are, I said, wild trees, peasant trees, bourgeois trees and dandy trees, this one belonging to the latter class. It might be considered an aristocrat of vegetation, for it appeared to have acquired the great air by watching the luxurious great world, the splendid carriages, the spirited horses, and the gorgeous costumes passing along under its shade. Trees in royal or lordly parks seem to bear coats of arms. No doubt wild nature is preferable, but there is a certain charm in cultivated nature. Why did landscape-painters never depict a park, a garden, a villa, so pleasant in its elegance even though somewhat formal?

Whereunto Théodore Rousseau replied, "It is very difficult to do so."

And on we went, continuing our conversation, through the Cours-la-Reine, the Champs-Élysées and the Tuileries, and we saw various groups of trees most happily arranged and of a beauty of form that could not have been surpassed in a virgin forest, but ever with an aristocratic stamp that was easily recognisable. The

artist's big eyes had lighted up, and already the picture to be painted was taking shape in his brain, while with uplifted finger, following the outlines, he was sketching in the main lines. Two chestnut trees that rise behind the Diana the Huntress, appeared to him suitable to form the central group or, as he called it, the key of the composition. He was full of the idea, and wished to paint the city trees, now that he had so well painted the forest trees. When we parted, he shook hands abruptly and left me saying, "I intend to paint that picture."

But he did not paint it. Man makes plans without taking death into his reckoning, and no one may be sure that he will finish the task he has begun. I did not again see Rousseau; yet who could have believed that the delightful walk of that day, filled with talk, study of nature, and friendly discussion of art, was to be the last we should have on earth? The day was lovely, and all around us smiled; the broad-shouldered painter, with his ruddy, strong face, his beard scarce streaked with a few gray hairs, seemed destined to live many long days. We felt no sad presentiment, nothing that presaged an eternal separation. Painful and sad it is to think that one parts never, perhaps, to meet again!

Now Théodore Rousseau rests in Fontainebleau, in the same graveyard where we had already gone to bury Decamps, away through the forest, on a spring morning that seemed to laugh at human grief. He desired to be laid there, near the Barbison cottage, covered with flowers and climbing plants, in which he took so much delight, and which resembled Gainsborough's cottage. May Nature grant sound sleep to her favourite painter, and may his beloved forest rain down upon him grateful shade and sunshine!

FROMENT MEURICE

Born in 1802 — Died in 1855

FROMENT MEURICE, the brother of the distinguished poet, dramatist, and journalist, Paul Meurice, was connected with the great Romanticist movement that, about the year 1830, renewed art in France, and gave birth to a legion of poets and artists, as the Renaissance had already done in the sixteenth century. Previous to that time goldsmith-work, like tragic verse, was cold, shiny, polished, and commonplace; it reproduced the old pseudo-classical forms, and the centrepieces it turned out might have figured on Astrée's table for the guests to eat lines by Crébillon out of; gems were set in flat settings or symmetrical frets that any workman could manage; silver plate affected English patterns — need I say more? The revolution begun by Wagner, a great artist belonging to the race of the Maso Finiguerras, the Benvenuto Cellinis, the Ghiubettis, the Aldegravers, the Albert Dürers, was

continued by Froment Meurice who caused it to triumph.

In that brilliant group of poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians, Froment Meurice, and it is a great honour, will be the goldsmith. He has chased the thoughts that the strong generation sang, painted, carved, or modelled. He has added to the trophy of nineteenth-century art a wreath formed of brilliant golden leaves, with flowers of imperishable diamonds. In one of his charming smaller odes Victor Hugo has called him the sculptor of gems, while Balzac, the Dante of "The Human Comedy," never fails to clasp on the arm of his courtesans, or of his high-born ladies, of his Duchesses of Maufrigneuse, or of his Aurélie Shontzes, a bracelet, the work of Froment Meurice. Every time that poets, novelists, or critics have to speak of refined luxury, of art that is at once rare and delicate, it is his name that recurs in their pages. If perchance fortune knocks at the door of an artist who has hitherto had only the cup of imagination to drink out of, he forthwith goes to order champagne icing-pails of the goldsmith who so readily enters into every fancy.

Froment Meurice did not execute much of the work himself, although he handled the boaster, the chisel,

and the hammer most skilfully. He invented, sought new designs, drew, discovered admirable combinations; he was particularly successful as manager of his workshop, and in inspiring his workmen. He has marked every piece of his work with his thought, if not with his hand. Like the leader of an orchestra, he inspired and led a whole company of sculptors, draughtsmen, ornament workers, engravers, enamellers, and jewellers; for the master goldsmith cannot afford the time, nowadays, to put on a working-apron and to compel the metal to assume diverse forms. Pradier, David, Feuchères, Cavelier, Préault, Schoenwerk, Pascal, Rouillaud have each and all been translated by Froment Meurice into gold, silver, and oxidised iron. He has reproduced their statues on breast-pins, cane-handles, candelabra, and vase-stands, enwreathing them with garlands of enamels, flowers, and gems, giving Truth a diamond for mirror, bestowing wings of sapphire upon angels, and clusters of rubies for grapes upon Erigone. And he never sought to appropriate any one's fame, well aware as he was that his own was great enough, and when he exhibited, he always frankly stated the names of his collaborators, whether artists or artisans.

It would take long to recapitulate the numerous works which won for Froment Meurice the reputation he has left behind him: centrepieces, toilet-sets, ewers, caskets, jewel-cases, Byzantine reliquaries, monstrances, chalices, cups, shields, seals, rings, bracelets, necklaces, snuff-boxes. He managed to vary indefinitely these fanciful creations of the world of ornament in which a female figure springs from the calyx of a flower, a monster ends in foliage, a salamander writhes in flames formed of rubies, a lizard disappears in grass made of emeralds, and arabesques delight in involved interlacings and complications; under the silver Nereids with hair of green gold, he has caused to swell waves of mother-of-pearl, pearls, and coral; he has placed under the feet of terrestrial nymphs a ground of diamonds, topazes, and fine gems; he has mingled metal vine-leaves with ivory grape-gatherers; set miniature harvesters in snuff-boxes, and turned his shop into a den as splendid as Aladdin's grotto, the Treasury of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, Abul Kasim's well, or the Grüne Gewölbe at Dresden. The blood-stained bouquet of diamonds that Cardillac won back at the dagger's point was reset by Froment Meurice, as it had erstwhile been, as brilliant, as light, and as sparkling with

fascinating rays, and, less cruel than Louis XIV's cruel jeweller, he did not assassinate its fortunate owner.

A goldsmith works for emperors, popes, kings, princes, and the rich on earth only; yet Froment Meurice, who counted among his customers Pius IX, Emperor Nicholas, Queen Marie-Amélie, Queen Victoria, the Duchess of Parma, the Duchess of Orleans, the Duke de Montpensier, the Count of Paris, Emperor Napoleon III, Prince Napoleon, Prince Demidoff, the Duke de Luynes, the Duke de Noailles, Rothschild, Véron, and Mlle. Rachel, had thought of putting the lovely art of jewellery within the reach of all women. He wished that every beauty, even though not rich, and without having to degrade herself, should be able to own ear-rings, a brooch, and a bracelet in the most exquisite taste, the workmanship of which should be more precious than the gold of which they were made, and with this in view he studied the great modern discovery — galvanoplastics, the marvellous process by means of which the goldsmith is replaced by electricity, and the finest models can be reproduced in endless numbers at a very low cost.

BARYE

THE Romanticist revolution which was prepared under the Restoration and which broke out in 1830, made itself felt less in sculpture than in the other arts. The painters followed the poets, but statuary remained almost impassible in its marmorean serenity. The Greeks seem to have once and for all fixed its laws, the conditions under which it is produced, and the ideal it must seek to attain. It is not too much to say that that noble, that pure art still lives to-day upon the tradition of antiquity, and that it degenerates whenever it departs from it. Yet here also the regenerating movement made itself felt; a few bold spirits believed that it was possible to introduce more naturalness in the old conventional mould, even if it were to crack in consequence. David d'Angers, Auguste Préault, Antonin Moine, Maindron, Triqueti, Mlle. Fauveau, and Barye were, among sculptors, the representatives of the new movement in favour of originality and freedom. The opposition they met with was even fiercer than that

with which poets and painters had to contend, for statuary, accustomed to and needing the nude, and borrowing almost all its subjects from the lives of heroes, from mythology and allegory, has forcibly to remain classical and pagan. It loves to represent form under the guise of Truth rising out of its well, and in the way of clothing it is unwilling to admit anything more than drapery, which does not fetter nudity. In complex and troubled times like our own, this setting aside of passion, of the accidental, of colour, this immovable calm readily lead to coldness and weariness. Composition in statuary is confined to eurhythmy in attitudes, to the balancing of lines, to the equipoise of contours; and the seeking after beauty precludes any characteristic violence. As it travels along this path, in a civilisation unfavourable to it, the antique speedily degenerates into the classical, the classical into the academic, and the academic into mere inferior imitation. All that is then obtained is a series of casts in which the original forms are more and more softened away.

In this struggle of new ideas on one side and of routine on the other, Barye proved to be one of the most courageous, most resolute, and most persevering

combatants. Born in 1796, he entered art through the gate of trade. When he was thirteen years old, he was apprenticed to Fourier, an engraver on steel, whose specialty was the cutting of dies for military badges. In 1812, he was taken as a conscript and served for a time in the surveying branch of the Engineers. Some plans in relief drawn by him at that period are even now preserved. After 1814 he resumed his former occupation, but at the same time he drew, modelled, and studied. His masters were Bosio and Gros, for Barye's talent was of that complex nature that is not confined to one form of art. He handles the painter's brush as skilfully as the sculptor's boaster, and I have seen water-colours by him that were remarkable for their strength and character. He thus prepared himself for the great competitive examination at the École des Beaux-Arts in the branches of engraving and statuary. Considering the talent he has shown since that time, and which no one disputes, it might be supposed that he triumphed easily; but either his talent was still in germ only, or the judges were not clever enough to perceive it, for he obtained no more than honourable mention in engraving and two second prizes in sculpture. He did not continue

his fruitless attempts, and, abandoning the school, he set about following his own inspiration, and it is quite possible that his failure was, so far as his individuality was concerned, a fortunate thing for him.

Forced to work for his living, he had to accept trade orders, which he carried out in a new manner that transformed them into artistic works. Very speedily he acquired unrivalled skill in the production of bronzes, the models of which he invented himself and which he cast in *cire perdue*, by the old Florentine process. He was thoroughly familiar with every detail of the mixing, the casting, the chasing, the putting on of a patina, and the great artist in him was served by the practical skill of the expert workman that he was also. I lay stress upon this fact, because most contemporary sculptors, taking thought for the ideal part of their art only, leave their subject, after they have modelled it in clay or wax, to be executed by their assistants, who cannot possibly give that final touch which is the very feeling of the artist himself. What these statues, mathematical reproductions of their models, lack is the last surfacing, the bloom of the epiderm, the palpitation of life, which is less important perhaps in marble than in bronze, the ductile

metal reproducing even the faint marks made by the finger on the clay.

Barye was long considered to be simply an animal sculptor, so quick are we in France to shut an artist up within a specialty, which it delights us to restrict more and more. Yet he had first made his appearance, at the Salon of 1827, as the sculptor of busts that proved he could portray a man as well as a lion. Excluded from the Salon of 1836, at the same time as Eugène Delacroix, Théodore Rousseau, Corot, Préault, Maindron and many another, by a committee then composed exclusively of members of the Institute hostile to the new ideas, he withdrew to his tent, as the saying is, not discouraged, but simply to avoid exposing himself to renewed affronts. A character like Barye, so robust, energetic, and patient, is not easily discouraged. Prevented from enjoying the benefits of exhibitions and of official orders, he brought out a great number of bronzes, both large and small, that added to his already great reputation, which had rapidly spread from the ranks of artists, who are first to appreciate anything. Barye did not, it is true, need to swell his fame by the interest that attaches to the victim of an unjust exclusion, but the martyr's crown, which he had not sought, did

not hurt him, and all the more did the public admire the manly, courageous artist who, in the silence and solitude of his studio, and lacking all government encouragement, wrought and multiplied works stamped with the seal of a strong originality.

Barye did not treat animals merely as a naturalist might do it; he was not satisfied with representing them with their characteristic traits and in their usual attitudes; he brought out their beauty and their peculiarities, seeking main lines, broad effects, splendid ports, proud outlines, well-balanced poses, just as if he were working at human portraits. Let me hasten to add that his thorough study of osteology, of the muscular system, of the nature of the coats and hides, and his prolonged observations of the living animals, his familiar acquaintance with their manners, their characters, and their ways, enabled him to conciliate nature and the ideal.

Let no one imagine that he produced academic lions and conventional tigers; it is easy to see the contrary by casting a glance at the great carved poodles, placed upon pedestals at the corners of the terraces and of the steps in public gardens. They wear marble periwigs in the fashion of the days of Louis XIV, the

... which, neatly smoothed, fall down their backs. ... faces, almost human in expression, ... make-up of heavy fathers in the old style ..., their flaccid bodies, rounded, boneless, ..., and filled with bran, one would say, are ... of suppleness and vigour, while their ... rest upon a ball with not very lion-like ...

... herefore, was the sensation produced ... Serpent," which is perhaps Barye's ... the sight of this formidable and ... with its wild, bristling mane, anger and ... back its lips, its brazen claws holding ... ous reptile writhing in powerless rage, all ... ched marble lions stuck their tails between ... s and nearly let go the ball that aids them to keep up appearances. Barye's was a genuine lion from the Atlas, superbly tawny, with unconquered ... and no trace of the academic smile in his ... Transported from the desert to the ... that like a real lion, and one would ... see it in a cage, had not the green

... that it ... Lion at

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rest," intended as a companion piece, recalls by the solemn tranquillity of its attitude and the sweep of the lines, the giant marble lions of Piræus, that were intended to draw Cybele's car, and which Morosini, the Peloponnesian, caused to be transported to Venice, where they now guard the gates of the Arsenal.

No less marked was the success of the "Tiger devouring a Crocodile." How strong, how grim is that contracted, arched back, quivering with satisfied greed, the paws, with prominent angles, the protruding hips, the heaving flanks, the lashing tail! How piteously the poor scaly monster writhes with pain in the grasp of those claws sharp as dagger-points! Never was the combat between things in nature, never was the fatality of destruction rendered more profoundly and more powerfully.

The mere mention of "Bears fighting," the "Bear in its Trough," a "Horse struck down by a Lion," a "Dead Gazelle," an "Asiatic Elephant," a "Jaguar devouring a Hare," suffices to remind every one of those groups, so full of life and of dash and so admirably wrought out. At the very least one knows the centrepiece made to the order of the Duke of Orleans, from the designs of Chenevard, comprising hunts in

nine different parts of the world, — an admirable theme that enabled Barye to mingle together, with picturesque fury, men, lions, tigers, and elephants.

During the long years of his exclusion from the Salon, Barye produced the "Three Graces," "Angelica and Medora," "Theseus fighting the Minotaur," and a number of equestrian statuettes that require only to be enlarged to look as well on a public square as the statues of Gattamelata and General Colleoni, for, I do not hesitate to repeat it, Barye is not only an admirable sculptor of animals, he is a sculptor in the fullest meaning of the word, of the highest taste and the noblest style. This was well seen in 1850, when he returned to the Salon, a triumphal return, and when he took, his place with the assent of all men, the front rank in which he had so long deserved to be. The "Centaur tamed by one of the Lapithæ" gave proof that the Romanticist whom the committee had proscribed was the modern sculptor who came nearest to Phidias and to Greek sculpture. The man, with his simple, robust form, ideally handsome, and true to nature, might have figured on the Parthenon pediment, by the side of the Ilissus, while the Centaur might have played his part in the cavalcades on the metopes.

BARYE

People were amazed that an artist who modelled animals so well should prove so successful in turning out men and heroes, just as though form were not one and the same, in spite of its apparent diversity, and could possibly refuse to yield its secrets to so keen-sighted an observer as Barye.

The sculptor of lions recently executed four groups in the round for the Louvre pavilions: "Peace," "War," "Force protecting Work," and "Order repressing the Wicked." The figures in these groups are happily combined with animals that bring out the allegorical meaning, and are marked by the quiet lines and the monumental serenity that best suit sculpture in conjunction with architecture.

Barye, who is at this time in the full enjoyment of a green old age, has a calm, strong, gentle face, on which his hard struggles have left no trace of bitterness, but on which it is easy to make out, behind the gentleness, a resolute will that nothing can discourage, and the modest consciousness of the man of talent who has long ago learned to dispense with praise, while the strong frame promises to be equal to many more years of work.

HIPPOLYTE MONPOU

Born in 1804 — Died in 1841

IF there be a composer to whom poets ought to be grateful, it is unquestionably Hippolyte Monpou. Far from preferring meaningless words, he bravely selected the finest verse, the most complex and the most difficult rhythms. Nothing dismayed him, not even fitful metres, echoing rimes, or the mediæval counter-echoes of "Odes and Ballads." He managed to draw from all these things unexpected melodies and strange effects, blamed by some, applauded by others. Eccentric as he was he had become popular, thanks to "The Andalusian," "My good Ship," and "The Madman of Toledo." He was a Romanticist and literary composer; brought up in Choron's school, he had studied attentively the compositions of the great masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and thus contracted a certain taste for the archaic, a figured style in strong contrast with modern habits. This also accounted for the lack of symmetry in his rhythm, for his overflows and his suspensions of the cæsura, so that,

better than any one else, he was fitted to set to music the verses of the innovators whom the reading of the ancients and of Ronsard had made enemies of well turned periods.

Hippolyte Monpou, like the poets whose lines he translated, was considered by the middle class a crazy loon, a madman who ought to have been muzzled instead of being permitted to sing as he pleased. Every time he sat down to the piano, his eyes blazing, his mustache bristling, a circle of apprehensive people formed respectfully around him; no sooner had he sung the first few lines of "The Andalusian Maid" than the mothers posted their daughters off to bed and plunged their noses, coloured with the flush of modest shame, into their nosegays. The music caused as much terror as the words, but little by little people got used to it; only, "golden skin" was substituted for "golden breasts," and "She is the mistress I have won" for "She is my mistress, my lioness," which struck hearers, in those days, as too dreadfully bestial and monstrous.

Innumerable songs, each lovelier than its predecessor, and several of which have become popular, spread the author's reputation and enabled him at last to reach the

stage, the great desire of his heart. "The Lute-maker of Vienna," "The Two Queens," "Piquillo"—the pretty libretto of which was the joint work of Alexandre Dumas and Gérard de Nerval—"The Planter," and "Chaste Suzannah" followed in rapid succession, and death found Monpou working at the unfinished score of "Lambert Simnel." This work, which gives evidence of great progress on the composer's part, was completed by Adolphe Adam with delicacy and discretion, and with artistic conscientiousness and piety that do credit to his heart and his skill alike. It was performed at the Opéra-Comique, where it won a great and well deserved success.

I am not of those who wait until after a man's death to discover that he was possessed of genius; I do not care overmuch for posthumous admiration, and what I am saying of Monpou now that he is but dust, I would have said of him when he walked on the Boulevard, smoking his cigar and turning some air over in his mind. "Lambert Simnel" contains passages that might figure in the works of any one of the masters, and which, in order to be proclaimed admirable, need only to be a score of years older and signed with a foreign name. It is of little impor-

tance that the matter of Monpou's operas was not very novel.

He was very fond of ballads, and hunted them out in the works of every poet of his day. He used up the whole of Alfred de Musset, and I can still remember hearing Monpou sing "Have you seen in Barcelona —," with the greatest spirit, and with poses and gestures like those of Hoffmann's fantastic musicians. Kreisler would have seemed cold by comparison with him. He sought after originality, and often came upon it. Never was a composer more passionately, more enthusiastically in love with his art; never did any one spare himself less. When he was at the piano and felt that he had been understood and appreciated, he would say, "What do you think of this one?" And he would go on, to our great delight, until the candles had burned down to their sockets.

He was as great believer as the rest of us in serenades, alcaldes, mantillas, guitars, and castanets, — in all that conventional Italy and no less conventional Spain made fashionable by the author of "Don Paëz," "Portia," and "The Marquesa d'Amaegui." He set these rollicking, hare-brained couplets, cheeky as pages, to mad, sparkling music, full of strange cries and pro-

longed notes after the Andalusian manner that fairly delighted us. Victor Hugo's thoroughly Spanish "guitarra," "Gastibelza, the man with the rifle," had inspired Monpou with a wild, plaintive air, of the strangest character, that long remained popular, and that no Romanticist, if there be any Romanticists left, can possibly have forgotten. The poets were very fond of him, for he respected their words and did not disturb the economy of their carefully wrought stanzas. Monpou loved difficult rhythms, and maintained that new motives were suggested by little-used breaks. In a word, he was one of us, and, as it were, the Berlioz of song.

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ROMANTICIST STUDIES

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Born in 1803 — Died in 1870

HARD, troubled, and adverse was his fate. As Théophile de Viau, the poet, says of himself, he was born "under a stormy star." His craft was constantly swept by the billows and the winds, half smothered in foam, struck by lightning, driven from its haven and borne back into the offing as it was on the point of making port. But it was directed by a resolute will that the very destruction of the universe could [illegible] and that, in spite of sails torn to [illegible] carried away, and a hull leaking in every [illegible] kept on its way to the realisation [illegible]

No man ever was so absolutely [illegible] wholly sacrificed his life to it. [illegible] tainty, of doubt, of [illegible] despair, of [illegible] means, Hector Berlioz [illegible] the base ten[illegible] bends over [illegible]

advice in his ear. His faith remained unimpaired, and even in his darkest hours, maugre indifference, raillery, and poverty, never once did it occur to him to win popularity by some commonplace melody, by some vulgar strain set to the rhythm of a country-dance. Notwithstanding all difficulties, he clung faithfully to his conception of beauty. It may be questioned whether he was a great genius, for differences of opinion are universal, but no one can deny that he was a man of great character.

In the Renaissance of 1830, he represents the Romanticist ideal in music, that is, the breaking of the old moulds, the substitution of new forms for the old invariable squared rhythms, the complex and elaborate richness of orchestration, faithfulness to local colour, unexpected effects of sonority, tumultuous and Shakespearian depth of passion, amorous or melancholy reveries, undefined and mysterious feelings which speech cannot express, and that something beyond all these things, which words cannot render and that notes help one to understand.

Hector Berlioz attempted to do in music what the poets of that day were trying to do in verse, and he did it with an energy, an audacity, and an amount of

originality that provoked more astonishment than admiration. The musical education of the French was far from having reached the point to which it has attained nowadays. Habeneck, who was devoted to high art, ventured from time to time upon one or two of the least *unintelligible* of Beethoven's symphonies, which were considered barbaric, uncivilised, mad, and unfit to be performed, although they were performed, while the Classicists of the day maintained that these symphonies were no more music than Victor Hugo's verse was poetry or Delacroix's paintings were painting. In order to render Weber's "Der Freyschütz" acceptable, Castil-Blaze was obliged to disguise it under the title of "Robin Hood" and to add a good deal of his own to it. Rossini himself, with his luminous and smiling facility, passed in the opinion of many for a musical law-breaker, a dangerous innovator who was corrupting the noble simplicity of the masters of his art. He was reproached with noisy orchestration, with using the brasses to make a din, with indulging in thunderous crescendos. So it can easily be understood that in such an environment Berlioz did not meet with much encouragement. Happily, he was of the breed of men who can dispense with suc-

cess; he had been drawn to his art by an irresistible vocation.

The son of a physician, and intended to be a physician himself, he abandoned the Medical School for the Conservatoire, where he studied under Reicha and Lesueur. His allowance was cut off, and he was compelled to enter the chorus at the Théâtre des Nouveautés, with a salary of fifty francs a month, which sufficed to provide for the material needs of a life wholly devoted to art.

His horror of vulgar formulæ, his feeling for description, his intelligence of nature, and his desire to make his art express what it had not yet expressed, made Hector Berlioz a true Romanticist, and as such he took his part in the great battle, in which he fought with incredible resolution.

He had already written a mass for four voices, with choruses and orchestral accompaniment, an overture to "Waverley," and the "Fantastic Symphony," the latter a sort of musical autobiography in which the voices and whispers of the orchestra tell of the artist's dreams, loves, sorrows, despairs, nightmares, and mad nervous terrors. It was greatly admired and applauded by the Romanticist phalanx, and produced at that time

a sensation comparable to that caused by the performance of the first compositions by Richard Wagner. The performance of "Tannhäuser" at the Opera is a perfect illustration of the kind of success that awaits any new work in our country. Violent discussions were carried on by both parties, and politeness often suffered, for in matters of art men become even more excited than in politics. Although Berlioz was generally considered as being out of his mind, he nevertheless inspired the terror caused by every individual known to be possessed of secret power. Amid his eccentricities, his obscurities, his exaggerations, there was plainly to be seen a resolute and unbending energy; even then he had the steadfastness of primitive strength, and he resembled that pantheistic character in the second part of "Faust" whom Goethe calls "Oreas, a rock by nature."

The public very generally believes that Romanticists, whether poets, painters, or composers, have thrown off the yoke of rules either because they have never learned these rules or because they are so unskilful that they feel fettered by them. Nothing can be more erroneous. The innovators were one and all deeply versed in the technique of their respec-

tive arts. A man must know much before he can reform. Every one of the so-called wild-haired, uncurbed artists who, so it was alleged, wrote only under the influence of delirium, were on the contrary consummate contrapuntists, each one in his own sphere, and perfectly capable of ending a fugue in the most regular fashion. The rigorous care for form and colour, the difficulties of composition, and the novelty of details, which were self-imposed, called for infinitely greater work than submission to the recognised old rules, that were, besides, so often ignored.

Thus Hector Berlioz' Romanticism did not prevent his winning the prize for musical composition, and carrying off the "grand prix de Rome" with his cantata "Sardanapalus," — a splendid subject, from which Byron had drawn a poem and Delacroix a painting. This was in 1830, and Berlioz composed, in honour of the men who fell during the revolution in July, a funeral and triumphal march of the noblest character. I can still remember, with a thrill of enthusiasm, the passage describing the entrance of the heroes' souls into heaven, to the sound of loud bursts of music in which the voices of the angels were heard above the already distant acclaim of men.

He then left for Italy, having already, though still but a student, acquired the renown of a master. He was not greatly taken with Italian music, with its little regard for harmony and its easy melodies, which take no account of the words or of the situation, and which, agreeable in themselves, apart from their meaninglessness, are embroidered upon a uniform background, like the delicate arabesques on the walls of Pompeii. The grandeur and beauty of Italy, however, did strongly influence him, and left upon his mind a lasting impression of picturesqueness, though the works he composed during his stay in Rome show that his mind was elsewhere. In the Villa Medici, under the spreading pines of the Pamphili or Borghese gardens, or in the solitary Campus, it was of Shakespeare, of Goethe, of Walter Scott that he thought, and there he composed his "Return to Life," his "Fisherman's Ballad," the Ghost scene in "Hamlet," and the overtures to "King Lear" and "Rob Roy."

No trace of his stay in Italy is to be found in the works he composed at this time; he preferred Germany, to which he was unable to go. At the performances of the English actors, which, like the passionate admirer of Shakespeare that he was, he attended con-

stantly, by dint of seeing her fill the parts of Ophelia, Cordelia, Portia, and other charming heroines so tender and romantic, he fell in love with Miss Smithson, an actress of great talent and beauty, whom he married, and whose illness it was, on his return from Rome, that prevented his visiting the land of Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. Heinrich Heine relates that Berlioz, in the days of his love affair, desiring to see the lady of his dreams nearer, and also, it may be, because he had not the money to pay for an orchestra stall night after night, had taken an engagement as kettle-drummer in the orchestra, and frantically pummelled his kettle-drums, just as Freiligrath's negro king used to beat his drum; and this especially when the beloved actress made her tragedy-queen entrances.

The symphony "Harold," which he composed at about this time, was received more favourably than has been the case with his later works. The Pilgrims' March in it was encored and obtained a success like that of the Pilgrims' Chorus in "Tannhäuser" at the present day. It should not be inferred from this that this part was superior to the rest of the work, which contains beauties of the first rank, but the particular rhythm of a march enables those who need to have the

lines of a poem scanned for them, and the time of a score clearly marked, to appreciate more easily the musical thought.

While Berlioz had many detractors and many who refused to acknowledge his talent, he had one partisan whose competency in matters musical none could deny: Paganini, the violin fiend, the violin angel, who was accused of having shut up the soul of one of his mistresses in the sonorous box of his instrument. That inimitable and fantastic artist, who made one believe in the power of incantations, was a passionate admirer of Berlioz, and he, the miser, of whom tales were told that made Harpagon seem prodigal, becoming as generous as an Oriental potentate, sent Berlioz twenty thousand francs by way of acknowledgment of the noble pleasure he had derived from that work.

I cannot, of course, follow Berlioz' musical career composition by composition in these few pages. He tried the stage, and his "Benvenuto Cellini" was performed at the Opera. The libretto was by Émile Deschamps and Auguste Barbier; the delicately wrought music was full of the loveliest bits and of the most original motives, but it had been decreed that Berlioz was not melodious; and in spite of the lovely air,

"Melancholy," so well sung by Mme. Stoltz, who took the part of Ascanio; the beautiful song of the gold chasers: —

> "The metals be subterranean blooms
> That ope but on the brows of queens,
> Of popes, and eke of emperors;"

of the suave and broad andante of Cellini: —

> "Would that upon the wildest hills
> A simple shepherd lad were I!"

and the plaintively graceful ballad: —

> "Happy all the sailors be
> As they roam upon the sea;"

in spite of the lively tumult of the Carnival that rang through the opera, the work had but three or four performances. Nowadays, when so many insignificant, old-fashioned works, so desperately commonplace in conception and execution, are being revived, it would be a good deal better to revive that bold, original, thoroughly novel work, which would be welcomed at present, and which might have the luck to win posthumous renown.

Berlioz was not discouraged, but as he felt that success

on the operatic stage must be paid for by concessions repugnant to his lofty nature, he confined himself to dramatic symphonies, such as "The Damnation of Faust" and "Romeo and Juliet," which he had performed at his own expense on that ideal stage where neither scenery nor costumes are needed, and on which the poet's fancy reigns supreme. "The Damnation of Faust" contains precisely what is lacking in Gounod's "Faust," in other respects a remarkable work; namely, sinister and mysterious depths, a darkness wherein glimmers faintly the star of the microcosm, the utter powerlessness of human knowledge in presence of the unknown, the diabolical irony of negation, and the weariness of the spirit springing towards matter. Unquestionably Faust, as Goethe conceived it, has never been better understood. I have the pleasantest remembrance of the garden scene, and the Infernal March that gallops along upon a Hungarian theme won an immense success. Then how many beautiful and insufficiently appreciated passages there are in "Romeo and Juliet"! — the ball in the house of Capulet, Queen Mab's scherzo and serenade, in which the composer rivals the poetry, the lightness, and the grace of the witty Mercutio, whom Shakespeare could not carry

to the end of the play, and whom he causes to be slain by Paris after a few brilliant scenes.

Berlioz was not only a composer of the first order, he was also a writer of uncommon sense, wit, and humour. For a long time he was the musical critic of the *Journal des Débats*, in which he maintained his views, attacked everything that struck him as being vulgar, and sang the praises of his gods, Gluck and Beethoven, in honour of whom he erected white marble altars as to immortals. But he never spoke of his articles, that attracted so much attention, save with secret bitterness. It is as grievous to a composer to put down his lyre for the pen as for the poet to lay aside poetry for prose for the sake of a livelihood, for the painter to make lithographs bring him in what his pictures should do. That is a woe we each of us have known, and it is by no means the least endurable. Every hour given up to such tasks is perchance an hour of immortality of which one robs one's self, and who can say that time thus lost will ever be recovered? Besides, when incessant labour shall have earned some leisure for one towards the end of one's days, will one have the strength then to carry out the conceptions evolved in youth? Will it be possible ever again to

revive the vanished flame, to recompose the vision that forgetfulness has borne away ?

These be the sorrows of the great-hearted artist, and this was the source of the tragic melancholy, the Promethean melancholy from which Berlioz suffered. He felt that he was a Titan capable of scaling high heaven and of standing face to face with Jupiter; yet he was condemned to remain nailed with diamond nails, by Force and Power, to the cross on Caucasus, like the hero of Æschylus, while the vulture gnawed at his heart. Nor did he even have the consolation of seeing the two thousand Oceanids, borne on winged chariots, coming to weep at the foot of his mountain.

"The Childhood of Christ," an oratorio charming in its simplicity, and in which the music lisps the first words of the new-born God, accompanied by the song of the angels, seemed to have been better understood by the public.

Berlioz' friends, as they saw the fairly numerous spectators, would say to him, "Well, they are coming at last!" To which Berlioz would reply with a melancholy smile, "Yes, they are coming; but I — I am going."

His last attempt was the opera "The Trojans," performed at the Théâtre-Lyrique. He had written the libretto himself, disdaining, like Wagner, to apply to a professional libretto writer. He believed, as did Gluck, that in an opera the words and the music should be closely bound together, and he did not approve of those breaks in the form of airs and cavatinas that stop the action. This opera, so different from what the public is accustomed to, contains great beauties; it is filled with a broad, pure feeling for antiquity, and at times there passes through it, sonorous as a trumpet-call, a wind of Homeric poetry.

If he had not attained popularity in France, where, however, he counted ardent admirers, he had long before become popular abroad. In Germany he was known and applauded, and there he was reckoned one of the great modern masters. But day by day he became more sombre and bitter; sorrow was changing more and more deeply his noble face, like unto the face of an angry eagle, eager to dart into space but prevented from flying. His long, fair hair, that he used to shake so madly of yore as he conducted some masterpiece, had long since grown white. Stoic of art as he was he could not bear up under the death of a son

he worshipped, though he had suffered so patiently for the sake of the beautiful, and though his self-love must have bled many a time. He wrapped himself up in shadow and silence, and then he died. It is only the grim and haughty that can love like that.

MADAME DORVAL

Born in 1801 — Died in 1849

MADAME DORVAL died of over sensitiveness, of passion, of enthusiasm, of too free a giving out of her soul, of burning the oil too fast in a blazing lamp, of the indifference, the disdain of the directors of certain important theatres, of the silence which was settling around her name, once so famous, and especially of regret for the child she had lost, for as that great poet, Victor Hugo, says: —

"Their little arms draw you strongly to the tomb."

I was scarcely acquainted with Mme. Dorval, yet I feel as if I had lost an intimate friend. A portion of my soul and of my youth has gone down into the grave with her; for when one has long followed the career of an actress in the varied parts she has played on the stage, when one has loved, suffered, and wept as she loved, suffered, and wept under the names given her by poets' fancy, there is set up between her, a radiant figure, and the spectator lost in the shadow a magnetic

relation that it is difficult not to believe must be reciprocal. When the beloved lips speak your heart's secret thoughts in the verse of the master you admire, verse that you repeat with her, it seems as though it is for yourself alone that she speaks thus, for you alone that she has discovered those inflections of the voice that move a whole audience, for you alone that she has selected that particular part, that she has put a rose in her hair, a black velvet ribbon on her arm. As she realises the poet's dream, she becomes, for the critic, a sort of ideal mistress, the only one, perchance, whom he can love. Alfred de Musset's lines —

> "If true it be that Schiller loved none but Amelia,
> Goethe none but Marguerite, Rousseau none but Julia,
> May they rest in peace — for love they did!" —

are just as applicable to critics as to poets.

Adèle d'Hervey, Kitty Bell, Marion de Lorme, you have all lived, so far as I was concerned, a real life; you were no mere painted ghosts, separated from me by a row of lights; I believed in your love, in your tears, in your despair; never did my own griefs clutch at my heart and draw tears from my eyes as did yours, and if I survived your nightly death, it was because I hoped to see you again on the morrow sadder, more

plaintive, more passionate, and more entrancing than ever. Ah! how jealous of Antony, Chatterton, and Didier I have been!

A great void is felt when the things that have been the passion of one's youth disappear one after another. How shall one again renew the emotion, the fury, the transports, the boundless devotion to art, the capacity for admiration, the absolute freedom from envy, characteristic of that splendid time, of that great Romanticist movement which, like the movement of the Renaissance, renovated art in all its parts, and brought out at one and the same time Lamartine, Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Alfred de Musset, Sand, Balzac, Sainte-Beuve, Auguste Barbier, Delacroix, Louis Boulanger, Ary Scheffer, Devéria, Decamps, David d'Angers, Barye, Hector Berlioz, Frédérick Lemaître, and Mme. Dorval, the latter of whom too soon vanished from the midst of that brilliant Pleiades, of which she was not one of the least luminous stars!

Frédérick Lemaître, whom I have just named, and Mme. Dorval formed a perfectly assorted dramatic couple. She was the true wife of Frédérick, just as Frédérick was truly her husband — on the stage, I mean. Their respective talents completed each other

and grew the greater by their combination. Frédérick was the man to make that woman weep; and how wonderfully, on the other hand, she knew the way to move him when his madness was overpast! What accents she drew from him! Whoever has not seen them together, in "The Gamester," for instance, or in "Peblo" or in "The Gardener of Valencia," has seen nothing; and can know fully neither Frédérick nor Mme. Dorval. And to-day Frédérick must feel that he is a widower in very truth.

The Théâtre-Français must feel remorse at never having secured that great actress, as by and by it will regret having allowed Frédérick Lemaître, an actor greater and mightier than Talma, to degenerate at the Porte-Saint-Martin or to tour the provinces.

I have at least the consolation of knowing that the tributes which, like mourning flowers, I place on the tomb of the great actress, I paid her before she was laid in her bier, and that while she lived she had the satisfaction of enjoying my comprehensive and passionate admiration, my enthusiastic praise, a nectar sweeter to artists than the rarest wine offered them in chased cups. I am not a mere posthumous panegyrist who praises those only who have passed away, and who is

willing to allow man or woman every possible quality once he or she is safely nailed up in his or her coffin. Why should not one be at once, as regards contemporaries endowed with talent or genius, of the same opinion as posterity will be? Why should one be satisfied with addressing lyrical effusions to their shades?

I first remember Mme. Dorval in the first performance of "Marion de Lorme." She had just passed from melodrama to drama, from the dialect of the Boulevard to poetry. And how proud and happy and radiant she was! How thoroughly at home she seemed to be in that part of tremendous passion and of such high grade! How easily she soared on steady wings, upborne by the Master's mighty breath! I can still see her with her long fair hair adorned with pearls, her white satin dress, and her maid, Dame Rose, disrobing her. The last part in which I saw her was that of Marie-Jeanne, another Marie, the name, her own, which so well suited her. She was no longer the brilliant courtesan purified and softened by love, but the poor woman of the people, the Mother of Sorrows of the *faubourg*, with the seven swords piercing her breast, like the Virgin on Calvary.

Her natural talent, which she had somewhat im-

perilled by attempting tragedy in Ponsard's "Lucrèce," for instance, required if not elevated dramatic poetry, at least simple and touching truth. The poor lady, unlearned in the subjects of the many discussions of the day and obeying only the dictates of her heart, had for a moment given way to doubt and hesitation; she had allowed herself to follow the Common Sense school, and had sought to declaim visions like a tragic actress at the Théâtre-Français. Fortunately she took but one step along that wrong road. She perceived in time that one ought not to leave one's path, but that the things passionately loved in youth should be continued in the maturity of talent, not, however, chastened and made cold, but spurred on and driven onwards with even greater fire and fury, following those men of genius who, as they grow old, become grimmer and prouder, more ardent and fiercer, exaggerating their own characteristics constantly, as did Rembrandt, Michael Angelo, and Beethoven.

FRÉDÉRICK LEMAÎTRE

FOR very many years I have made it a point not to miss seeing Frédérick Lemaître in every one of the new parts he has created, so that I know every aspect of his talent. It is always a noble and splendid spectacle to see that great actor, the only one in our midst who recalls Garrick, Kemble, and Macready, and especially Kean, make the frail wings of Boulevard theatres tremble under his mighty Shakespearian voice.

What matters the kind of stage if a man be inspired? Has not Frédérick Lemaître drawn in crowds the most aristocratic and elegant society of Paris, into that narrow den called the Folies-Dramatiques, in which Robert Macaire would wake on the morrow of his execution, enlightened and rejuvenated by the guillotine, and having come to the conclusion that Gogo was a less troublesome victim than good Germeuil with his cream-coloured trousers? People would have gone to see him even had he been performing under the canvas tent of some fair show, behind a row of candles

badly in need of being snuffed and between four smoking lamps.

It is strange that an actor of so much genius should not have been at once enrolled in the troupe of the Comédie-Française, though it is true that Balzac was never elected to the French Academy. Corporate bodies are always somewhat afraid of such great geniuses. It is the Comédie-Française, and not Frédérick Lemaître, that has been the sufferer, for the actor has been followed by poets and clever men in the course of his wanderings. At the Porte-Saint-Martin he found "Richard d'Arlington," "Gennaro," "Don Cæsar de Bazan;" "Ruy Blas" at the Renaissance; "Kean" at the Variétés; and "Paillasse" at the Gaieté, to say nothing of scores of dramas to which his own powerful individuality imparted life, and which when he played in them seemed to be masterpieces.

He enjoys, in common with all thorough actors, the gift of being terrible or comic, well-bred or vulgar, fierce or tender, of condescending to farce or ascending to the most sublime poetic heights. Thus he can with equal talent declaim the imprecations of Ruy Blas in the council of ministers, or rattle out a clown's patter upon a village green. As Richard d'Arlington,

he throws his wife out of the window as unconcernedly as he cooks the acrobat's soup and balances his boy on his nose. He says, "Play up, the band," as readily as —

"I hold him writhing under my armèd heel,"

or —

"I think you have just insulted your Queen."

In Robert Macaire, the Mephistopheles of the bagnio, who is much cleverer than his prototype, he carried sarcasm to the thirtieth power, and hit upon incredible inflections of voice and amazingly eloquent gestures, while he was finer than ever in Paillasse, the clown.

The Progress of French Poetry

Since M DCCC XXX

THE PROGRESS OF FRENCH POETRY SINCE M DCCC XXX

I

IT is no easy matter to determine the part played by poetry in French literature during the period which has elapsed since the Revolution of 1848. The great movement of renovation, which began towards the close of the Restoration and which was continued so brilliantly under the reign of Louis-Philippe, has not yet drawn to a close, and it seems likely to impress its own form upon poetry in this century. There has not been time enough yet to forget the old ideal and to discover a new one. The names that are mentioned when it is desired to sum up briefly the poetical worth of the period are always the same, and no new stars have been added to the constellation. If any new sun has made its appearance in

the depths of the heavens, its light has not yet reached all eyes; critics, those astronomers whose telescope is constantly turned toward the literary heavens, and who watch while other men are asleep, alone perceive and note upon their catalogues these more or less distinct scintillations. As for the public, it troubles itself little about them and is satisfied to recognise three or four stars of the first magnitude, unconscious of the fact that the faint gleams it neglects to notice are occasionally mighty worlds long since observed.

In order that my work may be clear, as is desirable, I shall indicate its necessary divisions. I shall first briefly review the general characteristics of poetry in the nineteenth century, and point out the masters whose influence is still felt by the present generation. Next, I shall speak of the poets who, having become known before 1848, have since continued to produce, and thus belong to the past by their earlier works and to the present by their later ones. Finally, but more fully, since it is the very pith of my work, the poets who have appeared since the Revolution of February. I should have preferred to plunge at once *in medias res*, but nothing begins abruptly; yesterday has given birth to to-day; ideas, like Arabic characters, are connected

with those that have come before and those that come after them.

Modern poetry may be said to date from André Chénier, whose verse, published by Latouche, was a true revelation, and caused men to grasp the full barrenness of the descriptive and didactic versification then in vogue. A fresh wind from Greece blew into every mind, and the intoxicating scent of the flowers that would have deceived the very bees of Hymettus was breathed in with delight, for the Muses had so long held in their hands bouquets of artificial flowers dryer and more odourless than plants in a herbarium, and on which no human tear or drop of dew ever trembled. This return to antiquity, ever young, was the cause of a new springtime. The Alexandrine verse learned from the Greek hexameter mobile cæsura, variety in measure, suspension, overflow, — in a word, the whole of the secret harmony and internal rhythm so fortunately rediscovered by the author of "The Young Patient," "The Beggar," and "The Oarystis." The fragments, the small unfinished pieces especially, resembling unfinished *bassi-relievi* in which some of the figures were almost completed and others merely blocked out with the chisel, taught excellent lessons

by the way they exhibited plainly the labour and art of the poet.

When André Chénier appeared all the sham poetry of the time lost its colours, faded and turned to dust. The shadows of forgetfulness quickly fell upon names illustrious but a short time before, and men looked towards the coming dawn. De Vigny was publishing his "Poems, Antique and Modern;" Lamartine his "Meditations;" Victor Hugo the "Odes and Ballads," and soon to the group were added Sainte-Beuve with his "Poems by Joseph Delorme," and Alfred de Musset with his "Tales of Spain and Italy." My reason for leaving out the intermediary poets, such as Soumet, Guiraud, Lebrun, Émile Deschamps, is that I am not now writing the history of Romanticism, and that it is sufficient to indicate summarily the origins and the predecessors of the present school of poetry. After the July days, Auguste Barbier cracked his whip in his "Iambics," and caused a lively sensation with his lyrical satires, the violence of his tone, and the rush of his rhythm. It was difficult, however, in more peaceful days, to keep up this high pitch, which harmonised with the tumultuous effervescence of minds at that time. "Il Pianto," in which the poet describes his

trip to Italy, is comparatively quiet in colour, and the thunder's distant roar is heard only as low mutterings. "Lazarus" takes up the tale of the poor wretches who have to bear the whole burden of civilisation, the plaints of the man and the child caught in the machinery, and the moans of nature disturbed by the work of the pioneers of progress. By way of contrast, Brizeux, in his idyl entitled "Marie," expressed pure youthful love, the homesickness caused by the remembrance of the mother-land, and the return to country life inspired in tender souls by the wearing existence in cities. Antoni Deschamps skilfully imitated the austere swing of the Dantesque style, and in his "Italians" depicted the country of green oaks and red earth with a drawing as firm as Léopold Robert's and a colour as solid as that of Schnetz, while Charles Coran, in "Onyx" and "Gallant Rimer," praised the fashionable Venus and the elegance of high life without leaving the boudoir.

Meanwhile the masters were developing splendidly. The "Meditations" were succeeded by the "Harmonies," the "Orientales" by "Autumn Leaves," "Shadows and Sunbeams," "Voices from Within," the "Tales of Spain and Italy," by "An Arm-Chair

Drama," the "Poems of Joseph Delorme" by "Consolations" and "Thoughts in August," and admiring imitators grouped themselves around each genius. Lamartine was the first to be copied, with more or less success; next, Victor Hugo had a clever, fervent, and numerous school; Alfred de Vigny, who withdrew within his ivory tower, had a few faithful disciples; later, it was Alfred de Musset who took the lead. His nervous sensibility, mingled with foppishness and sarcasm, his graceful carelessness, his easy verse that at times smacked of prose, and at others rose like a bird upon strong wings, his laugh tinged with his tears, his fresh, candid scepticism still full of emotion even when he blasphemed and despaired, were bound to seduce youth, and did so. Alfred de Musset is the poet of young men of twenty; his Muse sang but of spring and the beginning of summer; it knew neither winter nor autumn. "Namouna" gave birth to many imitations; "Frank" had many brethren, and "Belcolor" was presented with cousins and sisters innumerable. The "Nights of May, August, October, and December" were joined by endless other "Nights" that sincerely wished to be also lyrical and elegiacal, but which only served

to show how impossible it was to imitate Musset's genius.

Philosophical poetry found its interpreter in Laprade, whose poem, "Psyche," tells of the development of the human mind attaining to a higher self-consciousness through the different phases and trials of civilisations. Laprade is nearer to Alfred de Vigny's manner than to that of Victor Hugo, although his somewhat abstract idealism has an accent of its own, which came out later with unmistakable decision in the splendid piece of verse addressed to an oak, which is the poet's masterpiece, the one in which resounds his characteristic note. Since then he has repeated and prolonged that note, in weaker strains, it may be, but he has remained among us the hierophant of vegetable nature and of Alpine solitudes, a sort of Druid, or, rather, of priest of Dodona. In order to sing the great trees, he has discovered lines of sonorous breadth, of majestic and grave harmony, the echo of which may be heard in the work of many of the descriptive poets who came after him. His Muse possesses "the slow majesty of stature and port."

He was one of the first to restore the pagan deities to an honoured place in poetry, and to turn his eyes towards Greece, which the new school had abandoned as being

too classical. The poems entitled "Eleusis," "Cape Sunium," and others testify to his archaic and Alexandrine inspiration. He also wrote "Evangelical Poems," in which he poured the water of the Jordan upon Greek art, but his nature is at bottom a sort of spiritualistic pantheism. Reserved and shy of the multitude, his fame did not attain to that noisy reputation which places the poet in communication with the mass of readers, but he nevertheless influenced literary minds, as may easily be noted in more than one famous or well-known work.

Of these various poetic streams, rivers, torrents, and brooks, some have stopped or dried up, others flow on still, growing broader as they draw near the sea. All the poets of the present generation have drunk from these living waters, some out of a golden crater, others out of a clay or a wooden bowl, others out of the hollow of their hand, but invariably some drops of these waves mingle with their own particular wine. This is not to be taken in the sense of reproach, for originality is nothing else than personal feeling added to the common stock prepared by one's immediate predecessors or contemporaries.

I abridge as much as possible these necessary pre-

liminaries. In art as in reality, one is always some man's son, even when the child denies its own father, and I had perforce to trace the genealogy of the talents I shall presently have to study. In the case of many of them, who bloomed out after the great Romanticist movement, I shall be compelled to go back somewhat beyond 1848. They started some ten years earlier, although the best part of their work belongs to the period within which my work must be kept.

After the great outburst of poetry, to which the Renaissance alone is comparable, there was an abundant aftermath. Every youth turned out his volume of verse stamped with the imitation of the master he preferred, and occasionally betraying imitation of more than one. Out of this Milky Way, that spanned the sky with its whiteness formed of innumerable and not very distinct nebulæ, the first one to emerge with a bright and particular scintillation was Théodore de Banville, whose first volume, dated 1841, and called "The Caryatids," made a sensation. Although the Romanticist school had accustomed the public to precocious talent, amazement was felt at the union of such rare merit in so young a man. Théodore de Banville

was scarcely twenty-one, and could lay claim to the title of minor, so proudly inscribed by Lord Byron on the frontispiece of his "Hours of Leisure." It certainly was possible, in a collection of poems so diverse in tone and mode, to note here and there the influence of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, and Ronsard, whose fervent admirer the poet has rightly continued to be, but it is also easy to discern in it the man's own individuality. Théodore de Banville is exclusively a poet; prose does not seem to exist, so far as he is concerned, and he may repeat with Ovid, "Every line I tried to write was in verse." He possessed as a birthright that wondrous tongue which the world hears without understanding it, and in poetry he was the master of that rarest, loftiest, and winged form, lyricism. He is indeed lyrical, invincibly lyrical, at all times and in all subjects, and almost whether he will or no, so to speak. Like Euphorion, the symbolical offspring of Faust and Helen, he flutters above the flower of the mead, borne aloft by breezes that swell his draperies with their changing prismatic colours. Incapable of restraining his flight, he no sooner touches the earth than he forthwith springs skywards and loses himself in the golden dust of a luminous beam.

This tendency is still more marked in the "Stalactites," in which the poet yields fully to his lyrical intoxication. He floats amid splendour and sound, and the blue and rosy lights of apotheosis flame behind his stanzas as a natural background to them; at times also there is a great burst of fire, as at the end of an opera. Banville feels the beauty of words; he loves to have them brilliant, rich, and rare, and he sets them in gold round his thought as it might be a bracelet round a woman's arm. This is one of the charms of his verse; the greatest charm perhaps. Joubert's clever remarks may be applied to him: "The words light up when the poet's finger communicates its phosphorus to them; the words of poets retain a meaning even when detached from other words, and satisfy one in their isolation as do fine sounds; they seem to be luminous speech, gold, pearls, diamonds, and flowers."

The new school had made scant use of mythology. Its members preferred "breeze" to "zephyr;" they called the sea "sea," and not Neptune. When Théodore de Banville, following Goethe's example, introduced the white-limbed Tyndarides into the sombre, feudal manor of the Middle Ages, he brought back into the Romanticist stronghold the company of ancient

deities, to which Laprade had already raised a small temple in white marble in the depths of one of those groves of which he sings so beautifully. He dared to speak of Venus, of Apollo, and the Nymphs; these lovely names attracted him and delighted him as though they had been agate and onyx cameos. At first he saw antiquity much as Rubens did. The chaste pallor and calm outlines of the marble statues were not enough for him as a colourist, so his goddesses exhibited amid the waves or the clouds pearly bodies, veined with azure, flushed with rose, ruddy hair with topaz and amber tones, and rounded forms of an opulence that would have been avoided by Greek art. Roses, lilies, azure, gold, purple, hyacinth abound in Banville's work; he casts over everything he sees a veil woven of sunbeams, and his ideas, like princesses in fairy tales, move through emerald green meadows, wearing dresses the colour of moonshine, sunshine, and the passing hour.

Of late years Banville, who rarely dropped the lyre to take up the pen, published "The Exiles," in which he has a broader manner and appears to have attained his final form of expression, if one may so say of a poet who is still young, very much alive, and capable

of producing many works yet. Mythology plays a great part in this volume, in which Banville shows himself more Greek than in any other, although his gods and goddesses occasionally have a Florentine air that recalls Primaticcio, and seem to be descending from the ceilings or imposts of Fontainebleau, wearing silver-laced azure cothurns. This proud and gallant Renaissance port appropriately imparts animation to the somewhat cold correctness of pure antiquity.

"The Amethysts" is the title of a small volume marked by typographical elegance and coquetry, in which the author, inspired by Ronsard, has attempted to revive rhythms abandoned since the crossing of masculine and feminine rimes became obligatory. From this mingling of rimes, now prohibited, he has drawn exquisitely harmonious effects. The stanzas in feminine rimes have a softness, a suavity, a gentle melancholy which may partly be realised by listening to the singing of Félicien David's lovely cantilene: "O fair night, linger still." The crossed masculine rimes have astonishing fulness and sonority. It is impossible to speak too highly of the exquisite skill with which the author handles rhythms which Ronsard, Remy Belleau, Antoine Baïf, Du Bellay, Jean Daurat, and

the poets of the Pleiades made so much of. Like the lesser odes of the Vendômois poet, these small pieces have for subjects love, gallantry, or anacreontic philosophy.

I have so far shown but one side of Banville's talent, the serious side. But his Muse wears two masks, the one grave, the other laughing, for this lyric poet of ours is also a jester at times. The "Odes funambulesques" (Odes of the Tight-rope) dance upon the tight-rope with a balance-pole or without, showing the narrow sole of their shoes rubbed with chalk, and performing above the crowd amazing feats with a flashing of spangles and embroidery, and sometimes they take such extraordinary leaps that they lose themselves in the stars.

The sentences twist like contortionists; the rimes jangle like Chinese bells, and the clown describes the crude daubs of signs with mock gravity as he points to each with his long wand. It is something like a mountebank's clap-trap, like a studio joke, like parody and caricature. Taking the pattern of a famous ode, the poet laughingly cuts out the costume of a dwarf as deformed as those painted by Velasquez and Paolo Veronese, and he makes the parrots sing the

nightingale's song. Never did fancy squander riches more recklessly. In this queer volume Banville's inspiration resembles that dainty Chinese princess of whom Heinrich Heine speaks, whose greatest delight was to tear the costliest silks with her nails, polished and transparent as jade stones, and who laughed to tears as she watched the rose, blue, and yellow rags fly over the trellis like butterflies.

The author did not put his name to that clever poetic debauch, though it is probably his most original work. I am of opinion that such buffoon caprices are to be reckoned poetry just as arabesques are admissible in painting. Are there not to be seen in the *Loggie* of the Vatican, placed round the most serious subjects, graceful borders formed of flowers and monsters, in which satyrs' faces put out their tongues, and little Cupids whip up with a stalk of straw the snails harnessed to their cars that have been made by Queen Mab's coach-builder?

In the category of poets who link the two periods must be put the Marquis de Belloy and Count de Gramont, the poetic Pythias and Damon, whose names are no more to be separated than those of the Goncourt brothers. But their brotherhood in heart,

opinions, and feeling does not go the length of confraternity in work; each of them has his own lyre and sings by himself. Although both are equally royal and share the same beliefs, the talent of each has its own distinctive stamp and its own accent. In the poetry of the Marquis de Belloy there is a purely French characteristic which has vanished since the eighteenth century: wit. Count de Gramont is always serious, though never grumpy, but he either does not know how to smile or will not do so. His muse is grave, pale as marble under her laurel wreath, like a Muse in Raphael's Parnassus, while that of the Marquis de Belloy puts on a faint touch of rouge and a patch to go to the ball. Both seek beauty, but the one admits the merely pretty which the other rejects. Both strive equally after exquisite beauty of form, both are equally careful of their choice of words and of their style, both are equally patient in seeking after perfection.

Under the transparent pseudonym of "Chevalier d'Aï," de Belloy has written the intellectual history of his talent; he has depicted the literary fluctuations of the amiable knight, who is quite open to modern ideas, in spite of his caste prejudices, and who passes from the tone of Voltaire's lighter verse to the lyricism and

rich colouring of the Romanticist school. The refined, elegant, and rather aristocratic individuality of the poet is, however, always evident in his madrigals and odes. The book, in which the pieces of verse are separated and linked by passages in prose, is in every respect delightful.

Another volume, "Legends in Bloom," contains a number of poems, some of which are quite long. I shall mention as among the more remarkable, "Lilith," whom Eastern tradition affirms to have been Adam's first wife; a tale from the Talmud, told by an old rabbi only half converted to Christianity, and mingled with digressions and touches of humour, for there is a slight vein of satire in de Belloy; no more than a rose's thorn, it may be, but it scratches all the same and brings a little red drop of blood to the surface of the skin. "Faith Saves," is a charming legend, and in "The Byzantines," a dialogue between two pagan shepherds who perceive the dawn of a new faith, the author's elevation of thought, combined with the poetical character of the details and the beauty of the form, recalls Sainte-Beuve's "Neapolitan Eclogue." There is a splendid thought in "The Waters of Lethe": the author refuses to drink the water that

would make him forget the sorrows that have made a man of him, and the remorse which has purified him. He courageously refuses this consolation. Next to the Book of Ruth, translated with biblical earnestness and faith, de Belloy has introduced the legend of Orpha, the second daughter-in-law of Naomi, and has invented her life, availing himself of the silence of the text on this point. The style is so pure that this sweet and tender tale might be put in between the leaves of a family Bible.

The limits of my study do not permit of my speaking at length of Marquis de Belloy, but my sketch of him would not be complete did I not mention at least "Damon and Pythias," — a charming work after the models of antiquity, — "Mall' aria," and "Tasso at Sorrento." A thorough Frenchman, de Belloy is also a thorough Italian; he has Petrarca, Tasso, and Metastasio at his fingers' ends, like his friend de Gramont, who writes sonnets in the tongue of the lovely land where sounds the *si*.

De Gramont's "Songs of the Past" contain many rarely perfect sonnets. This form, so artistically constructed, of such accurately balanced rhythm and so pure that it allows of no flaw, suits his virile, austere,

sombre talent, so lofty and noble in its resignation, and which, though vanquished by destiny, preserves even in sorrow the vigorous attitude of Michael Angelo's "Captives." His opinions did not allow him to take part in the modern movement, and so he goes on his solitary way, proudly silent, through the ruins of the past. His genius seems to be incarnated in that magnificent poem in which one member of the tribe only, a stubborn youth, remains upon the land of his ancestors, while his fellows emigrate. "Endymion" is like a spotless marble statue of antiquity lighted up by a moonbeam. Dian's silvery kiss may descend upon the handsome youth, whom the shepherds of Latmos worship as a god; he is worthy of her, for he has the whiteness of virginity and the chastity of snow.

Along with the sonnets are longer pieces, which the author has called "Rhythms," and which exhibit not only elevation of thought and beauty of style, but also the most thorough knowledge of metre. It is evident that de Gramont has studied lovingly Dante, Petrarca and all the great Italian writers, who are masters in the art of writing verse. He is the only French poet who has managed to attain success with the sestet, a performance that seems impossible of achievement in our

language. In the sestet the rimes of the first stanza, constantly repeated, change places in the following stanzas, like dancing girls that lead the evolutions of their companions one after another.

Nor is Arsène Houssaye a new-comer in the field of poetry. He sang before the days of February, but he has sung since and his latest verse is his best. While busied with novels, criticisms, and literary history, Arsène Houssaye has published three volumes of verse, "Hidden Paths," "Wood Poems," and "Antique Poems," which came in 1850 and connect him with the period which I have to study, to say nothing of the verses that he scatters around as he goes on his way through life, and which he has not collected, — like the Hungarian magnates who do not condescend to bend in order to pick up, at a ball, the pearls that have fallen from their boots. Although his sympathy is with the great Romanticist movement, from which all the poetry of our age has sprung, Arsène Houssaye has not enrolled himself under the banner of any master. He follows neither Lamartine, Victor Hugo, nor Alfred de Musset, for his capricious independence refuses to bow to any yoke. He has not done like some poets who have made for them-

selves a model to which they feel bound to remain faithful under pain of contradicting themselves and being illogical. Many there are nowadays who merely imitate themselves, and dare not emerge from the unchangeable mould within which they have immured their thought.

Houssaye leaves it to others to co-ordinate or account for the contrasts which abound in his work. To-day, for instance, he will make a pastel portrait of Ninon or Cidalise; to-morrow it will be one of Violante, Titian's mistress. If the fancy strikes him, he will not hesitate to model in Parian or Dresden china a shepherd couple wreathed with flowers. But, once he has placed his group on the shelves, he forgets all about it, and he sets about carving in marble a Huntress Diana or some other mythological figure that stands out white against a background of cool verdure. He leaves the drawing-room glittering with lights to plunge into the green, shadowy woods, and if he meet the Muse at the corner of some shady walk, he forgets to return to town, where he has an appointment with some operatic beauty. His verse is as changeful and diverse as Montaigne represents man to be. It expresses what he feels at that particular moment, and

that is the way to be always true. Feelings are not all alike; the important thing is to feel. Under his apparent carelessness his heart beats and his soul yearns; the expression may be simple, but the accent is deep. Talents have an ideal age of their own, which often does not accord with the poet's actual age; a writer of twenty may produce works that indicate forty years of life; others, on the contrary, are eternally young; so André Chénier, Mürger, and Alfred de Musset. It is to this class that Arsène Houssaye belongs, and his hair, as golden as that of the Muse, obstinately refuses to turn gray. Old age keeps away from him.

In these days when the arts so often invade each other's domain and lend comparisons to each other, when a critic writes about pictures and books at one and the same time, it often happens that a poet recalls a painter by certain resemblances that are felt rather than evident. The flower-starred satiny shimmering of the greenery in Arsène Houssaye's poems, through the openings of which are seen in sunlit glades women seated and brilliant in silks and gems, recalls Diaz, that marvellous colourist who has also, at times, shown us Prud'hon's Venus wandering about in the

moonlight of "The Thousand and one Nights," though it should be added that Arsène Houssaye draws more accurately than Diaz de la Peña.

By way of a finishing touch to this rapid sketch, I cannot do better than quote Sainte-Beuve's remark. In his "Portraits" of new poets, he says of Arsène Houssaye, "He is the poet of roses and of youth." But the dewdrop in the roses is often a tear.

It is useless to seek a transition betweeh Arsène Houssaye and Amédée Pommier; the only thing they have in common is their unchanging love of art. Pommier is no new-comer; his first volume of verse bears the date of 1832, and his latest that of 1867. He is obstinately fecund, and his eight or ten volumes have not tired him out. He is a versifier of the first order, and no one can fashion and turn more accurately upon the anvil of poetry an Alexandrine or an octo-syllabic verse. If, which rarely happens, so sure is his hammering, he has to put the iron back into the forge fire, he stirs up the coals, presses the bellows, and the desired form is speedily given to the unwilling metal. The poet enjoys the fight, and he moves about like Vulcan in his cave, enjoying the showers of glowing sparks that fly to right and left, and the sonorous

rhythm echoing under the vaulting. He bears at times the marks of his hard work in the shape of specks and coal upon his brow, but the well-fashioned verse shines like steel and not a flaw is to be found in it. Amédée Pommier equals, if he does not surpass, Barthélemy and Méry in metrical skill, and at need he could have written "Nemesis" single-handed. His chief works are "The Book of Blood," "Oceanids and Fancies," "Sonnets upon the Salon of 1851," "Wrath," and "Trifles," in which he has indulged in all sorts of metrical feats with incomparable ease, agility, and suppleness. Such performances, which are to poetry what fugue and counterpoint are to music, may be looked down upon, but it takes a master to excel in them, and the man who has not acquired skill in them may find himself some day with a thought for which he cannot find a form.

Of all Pommier's books, "Hell" created the greatest sensation, and it is really a most original work. Thinking that hell was being over spiritualised, he made it more manifest, as Mme. de Sévigné said of religion, by the addition of a few fine old physical tortures, such as caldrons of boiling oil, streams of molten lead, ladlefuls of hot pitch, red-hot beds, prods with pitchforks,

and whips with scorpions, introducing the devilments of Callot into Dante's circles. The metre he uses is a strophe of twelve lines composed of a quatrain and of two feminine rimes thrice repeated and set between two masculine rimes. Pommier handles that stanza with uncommon success, and used it again in his "Paris," a sort of lyrical and grotesque description of the mighty city, in the course of which Victor Hugo rubs elbows with Saint-Amant and Scarron, — a curious mingling of splendour and wretchedness, of noble and buffoon characters, of brilliant pictures and garish posters, of superb verse and prosy lines, of rags and gems, of ingredients queerer even than those Macbeth's witches threw into their caldron. Sometimes the poet, like Lord Byron, who, in "Beppo," indulged in the fancy of riming the advertisements and the label of Harvey's Sauce, amuses himself with writing advertisements for the newspapers. The fault of this very long poem is the sort of snoring sound due to the redundancy of the thrice repeated rimes that recur in every stanza.

Amédée Pommier tried many a different style: odes, satires, epistles, poems, sonnets, fanciful riming; and in every case he has given proof of possessing a vigorous and robust talent backed by serious study. Chape-

lain might say of him as he did of Molière, "The fellow knows Latin." His best piece of work is probably the one he has called "Utopia," in which he describes his ideal of perfection. It is a poem of modest length, a gem in precious metal daintily wrought, a pearl set in gold, a flower that deserves to find a place among the loveliest in an anthology. He realised his dream as he described it.

Though it is but recently that Calemard de la Fayette's "Poem of the Fields" appeared, the writer has long worked in the field of poetry, an ungrateful and often sterile soil, that one abandons, however, only with regret. He had before this written poems and a metrical translation of Dante in very remarkable verse, and now, after a long period of silence, he reappears with a poem in eight cantos.

Long poems are rather rare in the new school, especially didactic poems. Although the style appears to be old-fashioned, it is really antique only. Hesiod wrote the "Months and Days," and Vergil the "Georgics," which are surely the equivalent of Saint-Lambert's "Seasons" and Delille's "Gardens." I am of opinion that Romanticism, which possesses so rich a palette and so broad a feeling for nature, and which is

not afraid of plain speaking and familiar details, might very well succeed in descriptive and didactic poetry. Calemard de la Fayette thought so too. Withdrawn from the bustle of Paris and having become the owner of a large country estate, he undertook to work his own land, though he did not on that account give up his artistic tastes. He tried to harness Pegasus to the plough, and the good winged steed did not forthwith rear and kick fiercely, as it does in the ballad in which Schiller represents it as compelled by a peasant to perform menial labour. Having recognised the fact that it was being driven by a poet, it did not fly up heavenwards with the smashed agricultural implement, and traced instead a straight furrow, for it was good soil on which it ploughed upon the gentle slopes that lead from Parnassus to the lowlands below. In order to write "Georgics," one must be more than a Vergil; one must also be Mathieu de Dombasle, and this combination is rarely found in one and the same man. But it existed in Calemard de la Fayette, who is not an amateur agriculturist. He knows the country because he has worked in it; he owns real meadows, real vineyards, real farms, real cattle, and, wonderful to relate of a poet, he knows the difference between wheat and

barley, and between clover and sainfoin. Living the healthy life of a gentleman farmer, he has acquired a genuine taste for nature and agriculture, and thinking as he worked, he wrote as he went, almost unconsciously, as he strolled by his wheat fields or his hawthorn hedges in bloom, the "Poem of the Fields" which has this advantage over all other works of the kind, that it is scented with the odour of new-mown hay instead of smelling of midnight oil. His descriptions have been drawn *ad vivum*, as the ancients used to say, not with the aid of a rapid sketch, but from studies conscientiously worked out in front of a model that did not spare the sittings. The accuracy of the drawing and the correctness of the colouring show that the painter has long been on intimate terms with his subject and that his enthusiasm for country life is in no way fictitious.

Of course the story told by such a poet cannot be very involved, and Calemard de la Fayette had the good sense not to introduce into it a romantic plot or superfluous episodes. Sowing, harvesting, the gathering of the vintage, the varied pictures of the seasons, the description of the farm-house, of the stables, of the horses taken to water, of the oxen returning from work, of the peasants, who are shown as neither worse nor better

than they are, but in their strong simplicity and their natural majesty, the expression of the feelings which such sights inspire, and here and there, in due proportion, flowers of poesy mingled with agricultural precepts, as poppies and cornflowers mingle with the wheat, — such are the elements the poet has used in the composition of his pictures and the filling of his canvas.

Nor is it to be supposed that city poets can teach anything to this singer of the fields; he has forgotten none of the tricks of the craft. His verse is full, solid, and grave; his rimes are rich, always supported by the sustaining consonant, and sound as clear as the bells on the necks of the cows that come down from the hills; they are always brought in suitably and are novel without being eccentric. Vergil, while he might point out some heaviness, would applaud these new "Georgics."

Henri Blaze de Bury, though he made his first appearance when the Romanticist movement was in full swing, towards the year 1833, is still a young man and has not abandoned the field of battle of poetry, as have done several of the best men, who have turned away from the sacred art for the sake of criticism, which is more lucrative and for which a market is more easily found. His first work was "The Supper at the Com-

mander's," published first in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and republished frequently since then. It was an extravagant and eccentric performance, in which prose and verse were mingled in Shakespearian proportions, and which made it plain that Tirso de Molina's and Molière's Don Juan had read Byron and Hoffmann, and listened to Mozart's music. The poet in Henri Blaze de Bury is composed of three very distinct elements: the man of the world, or to make it plainer, the dandy, the dilettante, and the critic. When still quite young he knew German and music, wore straw-coloured gloves, and through his father obtained access to the wings and private boxes of the operatic and lyrical stages. If to this be added a touch of the diplomatist, connections with some of the Northern Courts, the result is an elegant and worldly poet, though a very learned and very well-read and thoroughly Romanticist one, with a distinct character of his own.

Henri Blaze translated Goethe's "Faust," and not the first part only, but the second, which is infinitely more difficult, to the entire satisfaction of the Germans, who were amazed at finding a Frenchman capable of understanding the most abstract and resolutely enigmatical work of their greatest genius. His verse, most skil-

fully constructed, though at times apparently careless, recalls here and there the swing of Musset's. Like the dandies of the day, Blaze's verse wears a rose in its button-hole, and its hat cocked slightly upon its curly hair. The resemblance, however, goes no farther; Alfred de Musset is English, and Blaze German; the one swears by Byron, the other by Goethe, though both remain purely original. The German forget-me-nots, roses, nightingales, sentimental reveries, and moonbeams in no wise prevent Blaze de Bury being a very dry, sarcastic, and clear Frenchman who can put a little blue flower picked on the banks of the Rhine in a glass filled with the limpid Voltaire. His knowledge of music and of the great composers furnishes him with a series of comparisons and effects of which poets, usually pretty weak dilettanti, are deprived. I cannot analyse in detail his poetic work, which is voluminous, and I have to be satisfied with sketching the characteristics of this writer. To "The Supper at the Commander's" must be added "The Milky Way," "What the Daisies are saying," and "Wild Roses." The "Intermedes and Poems," published in 1853, contain "Perdita," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Vulturio," "Bella," "Frantz Coppola," and "Jenny Plantin," the latter perhaps the

best in the volume. It is the touching story of a maiden who has fallen in love with a sham poet, such as abound in our time, who marries him, makes him wealthy, and kills herself in order that a great and ennobling grief may enter into his commonplace and prosaic life. But the sacrifice is in vain; the Boulevard Manfred takes to writing vaudevilles and forgets the dead girl. The novel effects in irony and enthusiasm are rendered more striking by being placed in a modern setting.

In "The Hell of the Mind," which was his first volume, and in "Half Tints," another collection of verse that appeared soon afterwards, Auguste Vacquerie, who was pointed to by superficial critics as an enthusiastic disciple of Victor Hugo, exhibited, on the contrary, an almost fierce originality that causes him to stand almost alone in the Romanticist camp. A man may love and admire a master and devote himself to him almost to the length of fanaticism without necessarily becoming a mere copyist of his ways. And nothing can be less unlike the exuberant lyricism, the inexhaustible flow of language of Victor Hugo than the sharp, short manner of Vacquerie, who always goes straight to the end. In him will always prevails over inspiration and caprice;

the poem must express first the idea intrusted to it, and is scarcely allowed by the writer to gad about after flowers and butterflies unless this form part of his plan and serves as a contrast or a dissonance. He never adds anything when he goes over a piece, but cuts out; he does not graft on, he prunes, for he means nothing shall remain but what is essential. Auguste Vacquerie might say with Joubert: "If there be a man tormented by the accursed ambition to put a whole book within a page, a whole page within a sentence, a whole sentence in a word, I am he." This manly sobriety, severe towards itself, and which rejects every useless ornament, characterises the whole of the work of the poet who wrote "The Hell of the Mind" and "Half Tints." There is a mathematician in him who is constantly asking, "What is the good?" A lofty, upright, somewhat narrow thinker, he knows nothing of compromise, and if by chance he happen to be mistaken, he is so with imperturbable conscientiousness, with astounding coolness and stupefying rigour of deduction. Thanks to the clear-cut and logical form, error assumes the appearance of truth. Coldly resolute and absolutely tranquil, the poet carries a thing to its utmost logical conclusion once he has accepted the

particular point of view. Of course I refer to purely literary matters only. In spite of certain eccentricities, to which too much importance has been attached, Vacquerie loves the beautiful, the true, and the good with a love that has never changed. Since 1845, when his last volume of verse appeared, he seems to have abandoned poetry for the drama and criticism.

And now I am in great trouble. I ought to name among the writers who produced verse before 1848 and who are still doing so, an author who is dear to me, but whom it is difficult for me to praise and whom I cannot possibly speak ill of. Poets being in the habit of saying to prose writers who criticise them, *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, the difficult task of speaking of his brethren has been intrusted to a poet. But that poet, who is myself, and who owes to his journalistic work such notoriety as attaches to his name, has naturally turned out works in verse. Three volumes bear his name, "Albertus," "The Comedy of Death," and "Enamels and Cameos." The two former must be included within the Carlovingian cycle of Romanticism; they belong to the period between 1830 and 1838. Made into one volume and filled out with poems of more recent date, they represent the author's

poetical career up to 1845, and I have therefore no need to take them into account. But "Enamels and Cameos," published in 1853, fulfil the conditions needed in order to be mentioned in this work, and for me to omit them would be more unpleasantly affected than my indulging in the satisfaction of talking about them. And I shall talk of them only with all the reserve called for by my position as poet and critic.

The title, "Enamels and Cameos," indicates my intention to treat slight subjects within a restricted space, sometimes with the brilliant colours of enamel upon a plate of gold or copper, sometimes by using the cutter's wheel upon gems such as agate, cornelian, or onyx. Every poem was to be a medallion fit to be set in the cover of a casket, or a seal to be worn on the finger — something recalling the copies of antique medals one sees in the studios of painters or sculptors. But I did not intend to deny myself the pleasure of carving on the whitish or reddish layers of the gems a clean modern profile, or of dressing the hair of Parisian Greek women seen at a recent ball after the fashions of Syracusan medals. The Alexandrine verse being too mighty for such modest ambition, I re-used the octosyllabic verse only, which I made over, polished

and chiselled with all possible care. This form, by no means a new one, but renewed by the rhythm, the richness of the rimes and the accuracy to which any workman may attain when he patiently and leisurely works out some small task, was rather well received and octosyllabic verse in quatrains became for a time a favourite subject for practice by young poets.

II

THE February Revolution was not a literary revolution, and gave birth to many more pamphlets than odes. It was impossible to think, on account of the din in the streets; the minds of men were excited and inflamed by politics, systems, and utopias. Poets, therefore, kept silence, knowing that their songs would strike deaf ears. Yet out of all the hurly-burly there did emerge one original figure, that of Pierre Dupont. He very nearly fulfilled the ideal of a popular poet, and was the Auguste Barbier of that particular revolution, although there is not the least connection between his "Songs" and the "Iambics." Shortly before this time he had been casting about to find his true career, and had tried a number of roads, every one of which led him farther away from it. Finally, throwing aside imitation and conventional forms, he dared to be himself, and invented a new "chanson" which owes nothing to Béranger and at first seemed to have naught to do with art, though the

finest and most refined art is concealed within it, under a cloak of rusticity. These songs have not at all the air of having been written in a study; they recall the "cantilenes" chanted by the peasants as they plough, by the herds watching over their flocks, by the girls who sit spinning on the threshold of the cottages, by the workmen journeying through France, by mothers lulling their babes to sleep.

Such songs, in which the soul of the people lisps its secret feelings in artless, incomplete speech, charming as that of childhood, write themselves of their own accord to old themes that are ever new and yet old as the hills. The air is born with the words from the sigh of a pipe, the plaint of the wind, the song of the nightingale, or the trill of the lark. The bullfinch in the near hedge-row whistles the rime that is lacking, and if the rime does not turn up it is replaced by some sort of an assonance, or else the poet does without. Every professional poet must, at some time or other, have envied these couplets with their natural and touching grace, and must have confessed that he would willingly exchange his finest bouquets, made up of gorgeous hot-house flowers, for a single handful of these field grasses mingled

with wild flowerets that give out the very scent of the country.

It was Pierre Dupont's good fortune to convey a fresh and healthy impression of this sort to a public filled with burning passions. He made nature shine out in the very midst of the tumult, and led thoughts back to peaceful scenes. His song, "The Oxen," was an immense success, and was worthy of it, which is not commonly the case, for the people often take a great fancy to some idiotic refrain. Everybody in France, at that time, sang, more or less in tune, of "the great white oxen spotted red." It was at one and the same time the song of a poet and of a peasant, in which strong feeling was expressed in artless and charming images drawn from rural life, and in a highly wrought style, the art of which was artistically concealed.

"The Bagpipe" is, in its way, a little masterpiece, a sort of Theocritan idyl written in couplets and in the most humble and familiar mode. As the poet goes on giving advice as to the kind of skin and wood that should be chosen, the proper place to bore the holes in the pipes, and the way to make the instrument, distended by the breath of a man, tell of grief, joy,

and love, it is almost as if one heard a faun teaching a shepherd in an eclogue how to join with wax the reeds that form a Pan's pipe. Yet there is neither imitation nor reminiscence of the classical writers; the song is just the kind of song that a herd might chant while watching his goats from the top of a rock. Not a single literary expression jars upon the ear, and nevertheless artistic feeling is satisfied. "The Louis d'or," "The Speedwell," "The Evening Meal," as well as other poems in which country life is depicted with a truthfulness of colouring that excludes neither grace nor poetry, are the fruit of a delightful inspiration. There is something of Burns in Pierre Dupont. Accustomed to gaze upon nature, his thoughts run of themselves into the channel of reverie and contemplation. The author of "The Oxen," however, is no mere bucolic poet who, in his Vale of Tempe, remained a stranger to the tumult of life in towns or only hears the distant echo of it, like the shepherds in Vergil who, as they sit beneath the shade, wonder what that Rome can be of which they hear so much. Pierre Dupont lived within the furnace itself, on the very brink of the volcano, and every political event inspired him with a song that he set

to music, and which, like an ædes of antiquity, he sang himself in meetings, clubs, and studios. He had a clear, sonorous voice that soon was worn by fatigue, for he was constantly asked to repeat his stanzas, the refrain of which was often taken up, at the very second one, by the enthusiastic hearers. Thus for some months was presented the spectacle, undoubtedly a rare and novel one in our highly developed civilisation, of a poet performing his functions directly and placing himself in direct communication with the public, instead of intrusting his inspiration to a printed book. All he lacked was the primitive lyre formed of a turtle-shell and ox-horns.

Pierre Dupont's political songs are more utopian than satirical, more tender than full of hate. He dreams of fraternity, universal peace and happiness for all men. According to him, the sword shall break the sword, and love shall prove stronger than war. The act of fighting is a sort of embrace, and nations that have fought with each other are very near to loving one another. Amid all those lofty fancies the longing for the life of the fields constantly reappears; the deep yearning for nature makes itself felt in the heart of a stanza intended to be socialistic. "The

Song of the Workmen," which in more than one respect recalls the famous "Hooligans" of Béranger, and expresses with joyous and sad carelessness the solidarity of true hearts in misery, has a touch that is peculiar to Pierre Dupont and that is found in no other poet. The sudden cry, —

"We should love to be in the bright sunshine And under the great oaks' leafy boughs!"

carries the soul away from the sombre surroundings in which it is plunged. A burst of pure air and a bright beam of light make their way into the gruesome dens that are fitter for the habitation of owls than of men. This upward flight is wanting in Béranger's song, which otherwise is marked by clean work and much spirit.

At that time, and without indulging in any foolish illusion of pride, Pierre Dupont had reason to consider himself a popular and national poet. He believed he had linked his name forever to great deeds, or at least to what appeared in that day to be great deeds. In art, however, events pass away and beauty alone survives. The Muse is jealous; she is as proud as a goddess, and recognises her own autonomy alone; she

dislikes serving an idea, for she is a queen, and in her realm all must obey her. She accepts no watchword, whether that of a doctrine or of a party, and if the poet, her master, compels her to march at the head of a company, singing a hymn or blowing on a trumpet, she takes her revenge for it sooner or later. She ceases whispering to him the winged words that rustle in the light like the wings of golden bees; she takes from him sacred harmony and mysterious rhythm, introduces discord into his rimes, and allows heavy lines borrowed from the newspaper or the pamphlet to creep into his work. It is not that she rebels against the inspiration of contemporary events; she may be moved by them and utter in an ode a sublime cry, but she insists on being free to go when she pleases to listen to the eternal voices of nature in the woods, or to spell over her memories. To partisans she will always return Lenau's proud answer: —

"Poetry went into the deep woods, seeking the sacred paths of solitude. Suddenly there alighted around her a noisy swarm that called to the dreamer: 'What do you here? Let the flowers shine and the trees whisper, and cease scattering abroad useless plaints,

for here comes a virile school fit to bear arms! The woods will never inspire you with energetic songs. Come with us, let your powers serve our cause; newspaper praise shall generously reward each step you shall take on our behalf. Rise to efforts that aim at making the world happy; let not your heart grow rusty in solitude; come out of your dreams; become sociable; wed action, or else you will become wrinkled like an old maid!'

"And Poetry replied: 'Leave me; I do not trust your urging. You pretend to free life, and you will not grant liberty to art! Flowers never lie, and more surely than your terrified faces their fresh bloom tells me that humanity's deep wound is about to be healed. The prophetic whisperings of the woods foretell to me that freedom is coming to the world; their murmur tells it me more plainly than your papers with all their discredited bragging, with their noisy words in which there is no soul. I shall, if I please, gather flowers here; I shall, if I please, sing Liberty, but never will I consent to enrol myself with you.' And so saying she turned her back upon the vulgar throng."

Pierre Dupont did not, like Lenau, despise passing popularity, and he bade his Muse sing the refrain called

for, but he gained little by it. Gradually the tumult died away; the refrains that followed men from the street into the theatres, like a haunting motive that one cannot get rid of and that incessantly sounds in one's ear, ceased to flit upon the lips of men. Silence encompassed the poet; darkness fell upon his brow, upon which popularity seemed to have placed a wreath of immortal bays; minds turned to other thoughts, but Pierre Dupont will retain the fame of having believed in poetry at a time when all men turned towards politics.

A new poet was about to appear, and if in Pierre Dupont's work one feels the throbbing of the time in which he sang, it is impossible to assign a date to Leconte de Lisle's "Poems of Antiquity," which at once stirred the minds of those in France who are still moved by serious art. Nothing can be more haughtily impersonal, more apart from the times, more disdainful of vulgar interests and commonplaceness than these poems. The author appears to have avoided with austere reserve and proud resolution whatever might attract and charm the public. He has made no concessions to coquetry, to the taste of the day. Deeply impregnated with the spirit of antiquity, Leconte de

Lisle considers the various existing civilisations to be varying forms of decadence, and, like the Greeks, would willingly term barbarians the people who do not speak the sacred tongue. Olympic Goethe himself did not exhibit, towards the end of his life, more icy and serene coldness than this young poet at the start of his career, yet Leconte de Lisle comes from the tropics; he was born in a burning climate where blazes the sun, where flowers intoxicate, counselling vague reverie, idlesse, and voluptuousness. Nothing, however, could soften that strong and self-possessed nature of his, in which enthusiasm is purely intellectual, and which sees the world only when transposed into pure forms in the eternal sphere of art.

It was strange indeed to see this youth proclaiming impassibility almost as if it were a dogma, and affirming it to be one of the chief merits of an artist, immediately after an epoch when passion had been deified, as it were, when lyricism was wildly flying at its highest amid the clouds and the thunderstorms, when venturesome poets cast the bridle on the neck of Pegasus and spurred him on.

The volume opens with a poem addressed to fair Hypatia, that sainted pagan who suffered martyrdom

for the sake of the gods of antiquity. She is Leconte de Lisle's muse, and admirably incarnates his particular form of inspiration. It was right that he should invoke her at the outset of his poems, and his first song was indeed due to her. Like her, he regrets the splendid gods, the most perfect symbols of beauty, the most magnificent personifications of natural forces, which, though driven from Olympus, their temples and their worshippers lost, still reign over the world by the beauty of form. The modern poet, who ought to have been born in Athens in the days of Phidias, mingles Platonic and Alexandrian interpretations with ancient mythology. Under pagan fables he recognises primitive notions already forgotten, and, like Emperor Julian, he takes paganism back to its origins. He is more Greek than the Greeks at times, and his pagan orthodoxy might lead one to believe that, like Æschylus, he also has been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. He presents the strange phenomenon, for our times, of a soul from which every modern thought has been absolutely banished.

In his fervent love for Hellenism, Leconte de Lisle has rejected the Latin terminology of Greek names, for no very apparent reason. This robs these names, so

beautiful in themselves, of a part of their sonorousness and colour. With him Jupiter becomes Zeus again, Hercules Herakles, Neptune Poseidon, Diana Artemis, Juno Hera, and so on. Chiron the Centaur has resumed the K and is Khiron, which gives him a more grim aspect, while the names of places appear in the poet's verse in their real orthography and with their traditional epithets. No doubt these are merely outward details, yet they are important; their harmony and novelty add to the beauty due to the metre; their unwonted desinence introduces in many places unexpected rimes, and such a surprise is a delight in poetry that, like ours, lacks short and long syllables; the ear that expects a certain sound is pleased at being startled by the resonance of an antique one. Leconte de Lisle carries out his system a little too far, perhaps, when he calls the Fates *Moiræ*, Destiny *Keres*, and the heavens *ouranos*; he might just as well write in Greek. But one soon gets used to these revivals of ancient names that, at first, attract the eye, and one enjoys without effort or fatigue that austere, noble, pure poetry which impresses one like a Doric temple standing out white against a background of purple mountains or a bit of blue sky. Sometimes, not far from the fane, statues

of heroes, goddesses, or nymphs, backed by clumps of myrtle or rose laurel, exhibit their chastely nude beauty in sparkling Parian marble. That is the only ornament the artist allows himself.

The Greek in André Chénier, though it breathes the purest feeling for antiquity, is yet mingled with Latin, like a passage in Homer imitated by Vergil, or an ode of Pindar translated by Horace. Leconte de Lisle's Hellenism is truer, more frank, and more archaic; it springs from the fountain head itself and is free from all trace of modernity. Some of his poems read like translations of unknown or lost Greek originals. They have not the Ionian grace that charms one in "The Sick Youth," but they possess a severe beauty, at times somewhat cold and almost enigmatical, so severe is the poet towards himself. He would not, like Terpander, add three cords to his lyre; the original four are sufficient for him. Leconte de Lisle, indeed, is a trifle too severe perhaps, for it seems to me that Greek genius is somewhat broader, easier, and less resolutely sharp in outline.

In spite of Leconte de Lisle's love for antiquity, there is found in his verse a feeling personal to himself and not to be met with in the poetry of the ancients.

It is the longing to be absorbed into the bosom of nature, to swoon away into eternal rest, to lose himself in a state of infinite contemplation and absolute immobility that borders closely upon the Hindoo *Nirvana*. He proscribes passion, drama, and eloquence as being unworthy of poetry, and he would willingly stay the beating of the heart in the Muse's marble bosom. In his opinion, the poet ought to behold the things of this earth in the same way as a god might behold them from the summit of Olympus, letting them be mirrored, without being interested in them, in his lack-lustre eyes, and impart to them, with absolute indifference to them, the higher life of form. Such a doctrine soon leads to the forsaking of Pindus for Mount Merou, and the Ilyssus for the Ganges. Hindoo poems, therefore, at once follow the Hellenic ones, and in them harmoniously strange names blossom like the lotus and tinkle like the golden bells on Vasantasena's ankles. The Vedic hymn elbows the Orphic hymn; Surya, Bhagavat, Sunacepa, Vichvamitra, Santa unroll the vague Hindoo cosmogonies in magnificent verse, now constellated with images that are like the gems and pearls lavished upon the robes of a Maharajah, now as dense as the jungles where crawls the tiger, where

uprises the cobra capello, where the monkey, the descendant of Hanoumen, grins and chatters as it hangs from the creepers; but always, through some opening, appears the poet's serene thought rising above his work like a white Himalayan peak, the immaculate and eternal snows of which no sun, not even that of India, can melt.

As I have already said, Leconte de Lisle was born in the tropics, and though he has escaped the enervating influence of the climate, he excels in depicting these rich lands with their gorgeous flora, the names of which sound voluptuously in the ear like music, and seem to scatter unknown scents. "The Ravine of Saint-Gilles," "The Manchy," "The Sleeping Condor" render with incomparable brilliancy that dazzling world, in which flowers bloom amid a burning coolness.

It strikes me that the poet's masterpiece is the poem called "Noon," which every one in France who still cares for verse knows by heart. The scene is apparently laid in a landscape of Provence, southern Italy, or northern Africa, for we have no longer here the luxuriant vegetation of tropical forests, but the sober-tinted foliage and the sharp out-

lines of Europe. Noon, the hour of implacable light and of the sun high in the sky pouring down its burning beams upon the hushed earth; the hour when there is no shadow save a thin blue line on the edge of the woods where are dreaming the oxen lying down in the grass, — noon suits the poet, who delights in firmness and clearness and avoids vaporous, hazy contours. Better than any of his predecessors he knows how to reproduce its luminous feeling of utter weariness and its serene sadness. In his verse, the flaming atmosphere seems to quiver to the accompaniment of the cicadas' song, but the poet asks of nature's indifference and gloom no consolation of any kind; he asks of her but eternal rest and divine nothingness.

Greece, India, and tropical nature do not wholly absorb Leconte de Lisle; he makes many an excursion into the realm of Northern mythology; he glances through the runes and Sagas, and in his "Barbaric Poems" he appears like a skald singing of war before the battle begins, for he has a marvellous facility for assimilating the feeling, form, and colour of primitive poetry. Intrenched within his haughty indifference to success, or to popularity rather, Leconte de Lisle has gathered around himself a school of young poets who

rightly admire him, for he possesses all the lofty qualities of the head of a school, and who imitate him to the best of their ability, for doing which they are blamed, wrongly, in my opinion, for he who has never sat at a master's feet can never become a master himself, and no matter what may be said to the contrary, poetry is an art that has to be learned, that has its own formulæ, its own arcanæ, its own counterpoint, and its own harmonic work. Inspiration should have ever ready at hand a keyboard absolutely in tune and to which not a single note is wanting.

Leconte de Lisle may be considered one of the strongest and most individual poets who have arisen of late years. He marks everything he does with an unmistakable stamp of his own. If at bottom his talent is that of the ancients, if, in a measure, he is the descendant of André Chénier, of Alfred de Vigny, and of Lamartine, and if he has turned to account the improvements in metre and rhythm introduced by the new school, he possesses a die bearing his own effigy and with it he marks all his coin, whether it be gold, silver, or bronze.

Although Louis Bouilhet, through the character of his talent and the admiration he feels for its masters,

belongs to the great school of 1850, he belongs by his years and the time of his appearance to the present period. He has allowed the stage to tempt him away from pure poetry, and the brilliant welcome he received may perhaps keep him there for good. All the same he brought out three volumes of verse that would have sufficed to give him a reputation, even had he not tried his hand at plays, which so often make quickly known a name hitherto unknown. The first of these volumes, entitled "Melænis," is a poem sufficiently long to fill the whole book, a point to be noted in these days of elegiacal, lyrical, intimate, and almost always personal inspiration. Poems are rare among books of verse, which are usually composed of detached pieces. Modern poets, in general, rather neglect composition, trusting, as they do, to lucky chances in execution and to the minor beauties that are occasionally the result of carefully sought or of accidental rimes; for just as a motive uprises under the fingers of a composer who lets his fingers stray over the keyboard, so does an idea, an image often spring from the meeting of words brought together for metrical purposes.

"Melænis" is a Roman poem in which at the very outset, the author gives proof of his familiarity with

Latin life; he walks about the Rome of the Cæsars without once hesitating about his way, from the Subura quarter to the Capitoline Hill. He knows the wine-shops where actors, gladiators, muleteers, Salian priests and poets drink, fight, and sleep under smoking lamps, while some female Syrian or Gaditanian slave dances to them. He has entered the laboratory of the pale-faced Canidia, a gloomy manufactory of philters and poisons, and he knows by heart the incantations of the Thessalian witches. You may be sure that if he bid you sit on a purple couch at a banquet given by a rich patrician, neither Lucullus nor Apicius nor Trimalcion could find fault with the menu. Petronius himself, the arbiter of elegance and the purveyor of Nero's pleasures, could not arrange for a more voluptuously perfect orgy, and when Paulus, the hero of the poem, already forgetful of Melænis, the beautiful courtesan who loves him, leaves the triclinium in order to wander within the mysterious garden where Marcia, the young wife of the edile awaits him, the verse, that but now amused itself with reproducing with comic seriousness the strange sumptuousness of the Roman cookery or the grotesque grimaces of Stellio the dwarf, suddenly becomes tender, pas-

sionate, steeped in perfumes, and bathed in silvery moonbeams that rival the red blaze of the banqueting-hall. I have not, however, to summarise "Melænis," and I have no space to do so. Let it suffice to say that Louis Bouilhet has introduced into the framework of a romantic story numerous pictures of life in antiquity, and has shown that his scholarship as an archæologist in no wise impairs his poetry. "Melænis" is written in the stanza of six lines with triple rimes so often used by the author of "Namouna," and I regret the fact, for this purely metrical resemblance has led people to believe that Bouilhet voluntarily or involuntarily imitated Alfred de Musset, though no two poets were ever more unlike. Bouilhet has a robust, rich, picturesque manner, and he is very fond of local colour; he has numerous full, strong, broad lines, brought out at one breath, to quote Sainte-Beuve's expressions in his clever remarks upon the differences between Classicist and Romanticist poetry, which accompany the works of "Joseph Delorme."

"The Fossils," as the title plainly indicates, have for their subject the antediluvian world, with its population of strange vegetation and monstrous animals, shapeless forms, for chaos is seeking to create. In this

work, the most difficult perhaps ever attempted by a poet, Bouilhet has drawn pictures grand in their strangeness, in which imagination rests upon the teaching of science, while avoiding didactic dryness.

As if the natural difficulties presented by the subject were not sufficient in themselves, Bouilhet forbade himself the use of any technical terms, of any words that might recall posterior notions. Pterodactyls, pleiosauri, mammoths, mastodons appear emerging from the warm mud of the scarcely cooled planet the crust of which is burst open by volcanoes; they are not named, merely described, but so powerfully that they are easily recognised by their shape and gait. Terrible indeed are their loves and fights amid the giant vegetation of the first epoch, on the shores of the boiling sea, in an atmosphere laden with carbonic acid and traversed by the thunderbolts of innumerable storms. The colossal, the enormous, the strange, whatever is curiously and splendidly coloured attracts Bouilhet, and it is to the painting of such subjects that his broad, sonorous, and mighty hexameter, genuinely epic in its construction, and recalling at times the full and strong manner of Lucretius, is best fitted. The poem ends with the appearance of the first human pair, and the

author, foreseeing in the future further cosmic revolutions, hails the advent of a new Adam, who is the personification of a higher humanity.

In his "Festoons and Astragals" Louis Bouilhet indulges the wildest caprices of a vagabond fancy. In short pieces he sums up the aspect of a civilisation or a barbarous state. India, Egypt, China, painted with a few characteristic touches, appear in turns in all their quaint brilliancy. Modern subjects do not seem to suit the poet's style so well, although "Festoons and Astragals" contains a few personal pieces that are well turned and of much feeling.

It was almost on the morrow of the February Revolution that — though the paving stones used for the barricades had scarce been replaced on the streets — Joseph Autran's "The Daughter of Æschylus" was performed at the Odéon and met with a success that made men forget the grave political preoccupations of the moment. I shall transcribe here a few lines from my article of March 27, 1848, as they render faithfully the impression the play made on the public in those days of excitement: "At his first attempt Mr. Joseph Autran has won for himself the ivory stool under the white marble portico where are enthroned

the demigods of thought. The Greeks of Marseilles who dwell on a golden shore between the azure of the sky and the azure of the sea, are from their birth familiarised with antiquity; rhythm and harmony come naturally to them; endowed with Athenian sensuality for beauty, they possess a love of form rare in France, where men are thinkers rather than artists. Marseilles is the native place of rich rimes, sonorous epithets, and musical Alexandrines. There, poets still have a lyre, and could readily improvise their verses upon a promontory, facing the sun and the waves, in the centre of a circle of hearers, just as on Cape Sunium or the Mole at Naples."

The Academy's approval confirmed the judgment of the public, and "The Daughter of Æschylus" was thus enabled to replace the wreath of bays upon the brow of her father, unjustly overcome by unworthy rivals in his last tragic combat.

Although I have to speak of poetry properly so called only, and to leave aside the dramatic form, I had to mention this elegant and noble tragedy, carved in purest Pentelican marble, and which the author, modestly styles a study, since it was on the stage that our poet first made his appearance and in such brilliant

fashion. After so unmistakable a triumph — the author, summoned by the enthusiastic calls of the audience, was compelled to come forward to the footlights, nervous and apparently startled by his success — it takes uncommon philosophy and a genuine love of art to return to the peaceful shades, and to rime far from the madding crowd just like an unknown poet. It is true that "The Daughter of Æschylus" was not the poet's first work; he had sent forth, between 1835 and 1840 some *ballons d'essai* that the indifferent public had allowed to vanish unnoticed in the blue vault of heaven or in the clouds. With us, immediate notoriety is not easily attained save through the stage, and in spite of his success at the Odéon, Autran was more a lyrical than a dramatic poet.

Born on the shores of the Mediterranean, he had gazed from earliest childhood upon the sea of an azure lovelier even than that of the sky. He loved the waves that smashed into foam their harmonious curves, following each other regularly like the sonorous rimes of beauteous verse, the sails vanishing on the horizon, like unto swan's-down, the lights of the fisher boats illumining the sombre waves, and their ruddy gleam rivalling the blue gleams of the moon, until one day

it occurred to him that the sea had never had a poet of its own. No doubt Homer and Vergil have utilised it as a background for their characters, but they speak of it with timid respect rather than with genuine lyrical enthusiasm. The passages in which they allude to the "treacherous" and "sterile" element are not sea-scapes in the proper meaning of the word. Byron, who of all poets best loved the sea, has often addressed it in fine stanzas, and in his semi-serious epic, he has described a shipwreck with amazing truthfulness. The boat of Don Juan equals the Wreck of the Medusa, but Byron, any more than Delacroix, who drew such an admirable painting from the octaves of the noble lord, is not specially a painter of the sea. Autran desired to fill up this blank when he published in 1852 his "Poems of the Sea," in which he represents it under all its aspects, now luminous and serene, now dark and stormy, in a calm or in a gale, gilded by the sun, silvered by the moon, bearing on its waves a leaf from Vergil's bay wreath, or an orange of Sorrento, tipped by the sea-gull's wing, traversed by white sails of boats, lovely in its fluid and multiform beauty that ever changes and varies, and all this, not in the dry, didactic manner of the old descriptive poets, but with

a human soul mingled with the vast space and more vast than space itself.

In the preface to his book the author seems to have laid out his work for himself, a work which he carried on with a conscientiousness not always characteristic of poets. This is what he says: "In my opinion, there exist on earth three great, three splendid pursuits to which are due the honours of the Muse: agriculture, war, and the life of the seaman. Labourers, soldiers, and sailors, these are the primordial divisions of the human race; the three largest classes of our race of work, suffering, and glory are comprised in them."

The "Poems of the Sea" were soon followed by "Labourers and Soldiers;" so the three great categories of the human race have been sung in beautiful verse that has the luminous serenity of Laprade and the golden timbre of Méry's rimes. "Milianah" and "Rural Life," which form the continuation of "Labourers and Soldiers," show how the idea brought out in the poet's first volume has been adhered to by him.

It is the Romanticist school that has restored the sonnet, so long forsaken by poets. The credit of

doing this belongs to Sainte-Beuve, who, in the "Poems by Joseph Delorme," was the first to exclaim: —

"Laugh not at sonnets, O mocking critic!"

He himself wrote sonnets that are worth as much as long poems, for they are faultless; and since then this charming form, cut in facets like a crystal vial, and so admirably fitted to hold a drop of light or of perfume, has been attempted by a large number of the younger poets. It is noticeable, however, that Victor Hugo, the great maker of metres, the man who is familiar with every form, with every cadence, with every rhythm, has never written a sonnet. Goethe also long abstained from indulging in the sonnet, he and his fellow-eagle no doubt not caring to imprison themselves in that narrow cage. But Goethe gave way at last, and late in life composed a sonnet which made a sensation in German literature.

Of all the present day sonneteers, the cleverest workman, the most skilful chaser of that rhythmic gem, is Joséphin Soulary, the author of the "Humouristic Sonnets," printed in a way to delight bibliophiles by Perrin, of Lyons. The setting is almost as valuable as the diamonds it contains, and shows that one

has to do with precious things. Joséphin Soulary's sonnets, are, indeed, rare and exquisite gems of the greatest value; every pearl is of the finest orient, all the diamonds of the first water, all the flowers of the richest colours and exhaling the most suave scents.

At the beginning of his book, he compares his Muse to a lovely girl who encloses her lithe form within a close-fitting corset and a gown that sets off the shape it clings to. The thought put into the sonnet, which makes it more slender and makes the outlines firmer, does resemble the beauty who becomes more slight, elegant, and fairy-like, thanks to slight discomfort. Joséphin Soulary's talent, extremely concentrated, is an essence that has been repeatedly distilled and that combines in a single drop the savour and the perfumes that are scattered among other poets. He possesses in the highest degree conciseness, a close style; his verse is thorough; he knows how to reduce an image to an epithet, how to manage a bold ellipsis, and he exhibits subtile ingeniousness and skill in confining within the circumscribed space beyond which he may not venture, an immense number of thoughts, words, and details that would in other work require whole pages and prolonged periods. Those who like easy reading

and turn pages over with listless hand may think Joséphin Soulary's style somewhat obscure and difficult to make out, but the sonnet involves such skilled difficulty; Petrarca is not to be read as one runs, and from Italy, where men know how to value the sonnet, came to the poet a gold medal with this inscription: *Giuseppe Soulary le muse francesi guido ad attingere alle Itale fonti.*

I am well aware that, in times of exuberant literary fertility, a volume of sonnets is not much, yet I prefer to large libraries full of big books of melodramatic interest this delicate stand wondrously carved, that upbears silvern or golden statuettes thoroughly elegant and in exquisite taste, notwithstanding their small dimensions, ewers of agate or onyx, enamelled perfume boxes containing concentrated perfumes, precious Myrrhine vases opalescent with all the colours of the iris, and sometimes one of the lovely small lachrymatories in antique clay containing a tear turned into a pearl so that it shall not evaporate.

On the extreme confines of Romanticism, in a strange land lighted by a weird light, appeared, soon after 1848, a singular poet, Charles Baudelaire, the author of "The Flowers of Evil," a volume that created a

sensation such as does not usually herald the appearance of a book of verse. "The Flowers of Evil" are indeed strange flowers, unlike those of which nosegays are usually formed; they have the metallic colouring, the black or glaucous leaves, the curiously striated calyxes, and the intoxicating perfume of those exotic blooms the perfume of which may not be inhaled without peril. They have grown on the black loam of rotten civilisations, those flowers, which the poet seems to have brought back from India and Java, and which he cultivates in preference to lilies and roses, jasmine and forget-me-nots and violets, the innocent flora of small volumes bound in straw-yellow or pearl-gray covers. I must confess that Baudelaire lacks ingenuousness and candour; his is a very subtile, very refined, very paradoxical mind, and his inspiration is largely mingled with the critical spirit. His familiarity with Edgar Poe, gained by translating the works of that eccentric American genius, whom he was the first to introduce to the French, has exercised great influence upon his mind, naturally fond of deliberate and mathematical originality. Vergil produced Dante, and Edgar Poe, Baudelaire; the raven of the American poet seems at times to croak its incessant *Never — Nevermore!* in

the verse of the Parisian poet, for, although he travelled in India in his early youth, Baudelaire belongs to Paris, where he spent almost the whole of his life, and where he has just died, alas! still quite young. Like Edgar Poe, he believes in innate perversity. By perversity is to be understood that strange instinct that urges us, in spite of our sober reason, to commit absurd, hurtful, or dangerous acts for no other reason than that one ought not to do them; that gratuitous wickedness, that secret revolt which led the first woman, amid the joys of Paradise, to listen to the suggestions of the serpent,—a piece of perfidious counsel that humanity has but too well kept in mind.

On the other hand, the poet is not in the least indulgent to the vices, the depravation, and the abominations he describes with the coolness of an anatomical painter. He repels them as infractions of the universal harmony, for, in spite of his eccentricities, he loves order and the normal. Pitiless towards his fellows, he is no less severe towards himself; he tells of his own mistakes, his own stumblings, his own madness, his own perversity, with manly courage and without sparing the hypocrisy of the reader who is himself in secret a prey to similar vices. His disgust for mod-

ern wretchedness and ugliness fills him with a melancholy by comparison with which that of Young is jollity.

Although he loves Paris as Balzac loved it, although, in his search for rimes, he wanders through its most sinister and mysterious lanes at the hour when the reflections of the lights change the pools of rain water into pools of blood, and when the moon moves along the broken outline of the dark roofs like an old yellow ivory skull, though he stops at times by the smoke-dimmed windows of dens, listening to the croaking song of the drunkard and the strident laughter of the prostitute, or else under hospital windows to note the moans of the patients, whose pain, like his own, revives with the coming of gray dawn, yet very often a suddenly recurring thought takes him back to India, the Paradise of his youth, through a vista opened up by remembrance. Then, as in fairy plays, through a haze of gold and azure, are seen palm trees bending to the soft-scented breeze, brown faces that, with teeth showing in smiles, seek to relieve the master's sadness.

If on the one hand the artifices of Parisian coquetry delight the refined poet of "The Flowers of Evil,"

on the other hand he is passionately fond of exotic singularities. High above all the fancies, the infidelities, and angers in his work, stands out obstinately a strange figure, a Venus cast in African bronze, dark but beautiful, *nigra sed formosa*, a sort of Black Madonna, whose niche is always adorned with crystal suns and clusters of pearls. To her he returns after his excursions into the horrible, asking of her, if not happiness, at least sleep and forgetfulness. This wild mistress, mute and grim as the sphinx, with her scents that make men drowse and her caresses that hurt, seems to be a symbol of primitive life or of nature, to which tend again the aspirations of man when he is weary of the complications of that civilised life without which, it may be, he cannot get along.

Of course it is impossible, within the necessarily restricted limits of my work, to give a detailed summary of this most strange volume. The poet's talent for concentration has caused him to reduce each piece to a single drop of essence enclosed in a crystal flagon cut with many facets: essence of roses, of hashish, of opium, of vinegar, or of English salts that must be carefully drunk or breathed, like all liquors of exquisite intensity.

Let me quote "The Little Old Women," a singularly fanciful poem, in which the author discerns with melancholy pity, under the ravages of wretchedness, carelessness, or vice, traces of elegance, a certain faded charm, and as it were a spark of soul. One of the most remarkable pieces in the volume is called "A Parisian Dream." It is a splendid, sombre nightmare, worthy of Martin's mezzotint Babels. Imagine an unnatural or rather a magical prospect, composed of metal, marble, and water, from which vegetation is banished as out of place. Everything rigid, polished, shimmering under a moonless, sunless, starless sky. In the centre of eternal silence rise, glowing with inward fire, palaces, colonnades, towers, stairs, pumping-stations whence fall heavy cascades like curtains of crystal. Blue waters are set like steel mirrors of antiquity between quays or in basins of burnished gold, or flow under bridges made of precious stones. The liquid is set in the crystallised beams, and the porphyry slabs of the terraces reflect objects like mirrors. The poem is black and shiny as ebony. We are far indeed, in this short piece, purposely composed of factitious elements and producing effects contrary to the ordinary aspects of nature, from the artlessly sentimen-

tal poems and little May songs in which poets sing of the tender green foliage, the warbling of birds, and the smiles of the sun.

Baudelaire was of opinion that there came a time in art when all the great general feelings and what might be called the sublime commonplaces of humanity had already been expressed as perfectly as it was possible to express them by poets who had become classics. He believed that it was puerile to attempt to appear simple in the midst of a complex civilisation, and that it was absurd to pretend to ignore what one knew perfectly well; that the natural art of the great ages should be followed by a supple and complex art, which should be at one and the same time objective and subjective, which should investigate, be curious of knowing, seeking new terms in every dictionary, borrowing colours from every palette, harmony from every lyre, secrets from science, and analysis from the critics, in order to render the poet's thoughts, dreams, and postulates. These thoughts, it is true, have not the bloom of early youth; they are subtile, affected, smack of gongorism, are eccentrically deep, egotistically individual, turn on themselves like monomania and carry the seeking after novelty to the point of excess and paroxysm. If I

may borrow a comparison from the writer whose talent I am trying to define, the difference is the same as that between the harsh, white, perpendicular light of noon that presses down upon everything and the horizontal light of evening that makes the strangely formed clouds blaze with all the colours of molten metals and iridescent gems. Can it be said that the setting sun, because its tone is less simple than that of the morning, is a decadent sun, worthy only of contempt and anathema? It may be urged that its belated splendour, in which colours and tints are decomposed, set on fire, exacerbated and tripled in intensity, is about to sink into night. But has not night also, that causes millions of stars to shine, night, with its changing moon, its wild-haired comets, its aurora borealis, its mysterious shadows, and its secret terrors, is not night also possessed of merit and poesy?

I must ask leave, in order to complete this portrait, to borrow a passage from a study written by me some years ago, at a time when there was no reason to anticipate the death of the poet who has passed away in such sad fashion. I was expressing the impression produced upon me by "The Flowers of Evil" by

means of an analogy drawn from an American writer with whom Baudelaire must certainly have been acquainted : —

" In one of Hawthorne's tales, there is a description of a curious garden in which a botanist, who is also a toxicologist, has collected the flora of poisonous plants. These plants, with their strangely cut leaves of a blackish or glaucous mineral-green, as if they were dyed with sulphate of copper, possess a sinister and formidable beauty ; in spite of their charm, they are felt to be dangerous ; their haughty, provoking, and perfidious attitude betrays the consciousness of mighty power or irresistible seductiveness. Their blooms, fiercely striped and barred, of a purple colour resembling clotted blood, or chlorotic white, exhale bitter, intoxicating perfumes ; in their poisonous calyces dew is transformed into aqua tofana, and around them buzz only cantharides with their corselets of green and gold, and steel-blue flies whose sting causes carbuncles. The euphorbia, the deadly nightshade, the henbane, the hemlock, the belladonna, mingle their cold venom with the burning poisons of the tropics and of India. The manchineel displays its little apples, as deadly as those that hung from the tree of knowledge of good and evil ; the upas tree drops its milky juice which burns deeper than acid. Above the garden hovers a deadly vapour, which suffocates birds as they pass through it. Yet the doctor's daughter lives with impunity amid these mephitic miasmas ; her lungs breathe in without danger an atmosphere which to any one else than her father and herself would

be certain death. She makes necklaces of these flowers. She adorns her hair and perfumes her bosom with them, she bites their petals as maids nibble at the petals of roses. Slowly saturated with venomous juices, she has become herself a living poison; she neutralises all others. Her beauty, like that of the plants of the garden, has something weird, fatal, morbid about it. Her hair, of a bluish black, contrasts strangely with her complexion, dead pale and greenish, on which her lips show so purple that they seem to be stained by some sanguine berry; her strange smile reveals teeth set in dark red gums, and her fixed glance fascinates and repels. She looks like one of those Japanese women, vampires of love, diurnal succubæ, whose love exhausts in a fortnight the blood, the marrow, and the soul of a European. And yet she is a virgin, is the doctor's daughter, and languishes in solitude. Love seeks in vain to acclimatise itself in that atmosphere, out of which she herself could not live."

Long did Baudelaire's Muse wander about that garden with impunity, but one night, ill and weak, it died of breathing in the scent of these deadly flowers.

Next to Baudelaire may be set one who, like him, died a premature and regrettable death, Henri Mürger, the novelist of Bohemia, who is likewise one of the characteristic figures of that day. Mürger is entitled to figure in this book, for in spite of the difficulties of a life of adventures and work, he was a poet in his

leisure hours and bequeathed to the public a volume of verse, which was the last publication of which he read the proofs. No doubt, like all those who have begun by writing in prose, Mürger lacked that deep knowledge of rhythm which can be acquired through long practice only. He could not play upon the poetical keyboard with complete facility and freedom, but he made up for this by wit, taste, and feeling. He had the art of putting into his verse, as in his prose, an accent of emotion and raillery, a smile that has a tear in it, a sadness that seeks to be joyful and that tries in vain to forget, an intelligence ever deceived but never duped, that knows better than Shakespeare that frailty is woman's name. He is marked by a certain feminine and nervous grace which is wholly his own, and which must be credited to him. This particular touch prevails over the imitations of Alfred de Musset that are too evident in his book, in which there is one masterpiece, a tear that has turned into a pearl of poesy; I mean "Musette's Song," in which Mürger is to be found in full. The five or six stanzas sum up his soul and his life, his poetics and his talent.

Thomas Hood, the English humourist and caricaturist, carried away by a jovially funereal fancy, was one

day drawing a sketch of his own tombstone, on which he placed for sole epitaph the words:

"HE WROTE THE SONG OF THE SHIRT"

So on Mürger's tomb, upon which youth casts its last blooms, might be inscribed:

"HE WROTE MUSETTE'S SONG"

While I am on the subject of songs, let me point to the fact that they are not often met with in the new school, the art of Boufflers, Désaugiers, and Béranger being rather disdained by it as frivolous and trifling. The guitar has been set aside for the lyre, and Pierre Dupont himself aimed to write popular odes, poetic "Marseillaises." Yet the song is a thoroughly French form, just as French as comic opera and vaudeville. Gustave Nadaud has written a modern song kept within the limits of that style, and which nevertheless contains the new qualities of images, rhythm, and style that are indispensable to-day. He has written the music to his own words, and sings them with much taste and expression. The Muse of Song is a kindly wench that tolerates pleasantries and does not object to having her neckerchief rumpled, provided it be done with a light hand. Her rosy lips willingly enough sip from the

poet's glass in which sparkles the silvery foam of champagne. She replies to a risky remark by a frank burst of laughter that shows her white teeth and ruddy gums. But her gaiety has nothing unhealthy about it, and our ancestors took her in patriarchal fashion upon their knee. Now that the world is more corrupt, modesty is naturally more susceptible, and Gustave Nadaud had to make use of infinite art and discretion in order to preserve, in spite of such scruples, the liberty of the song, which needs a touch of freedom of speech, of real or feigned intoxication, and of sarcastic opposition. To songs in this vein, that derive from Anacreon through Horace and Béranger, Gustave Nadaud has often added others of lofty inspiration and exquisite feeling, that, but for the refrain he has affixed to them, might well be classed as odes. Quickly, however, he returns to the light, tender, witty, or comical tone that best suits his instrument; for Nadaud, after all, though a poet, is a true song-writer.

I have pointed out the four or five figures that recur of themselves to the memory and to the critic's pen in a census of poetry since 1848. Each has its own individuality, natural or acquired, that distinguishes it from the crowd without giving it an eminent

position. Each of these poets is admired within his own school and by a certain portion of the public, but not one of them has yet won the general notoriety that Time transforms into glory. This in no wise takes from their talent, which is unquestionable and which at any other time would have attracted attention. But it is unfortunately true that nowadays a man may publish two or three volumes of meritorious verse and remain absolutely unknown. That is the case with very many young fellows, possessed of ideas, feeling, grace, freshness, style, and remarkable skill for versification. They must wonder why nobody reads them, and the truth is it would be difficult to give a satisfactory answer. The public, full of other preoccupations and turning to scientific and historical researches, has left poetry to one side. Reviews no longer admit verse; the newspapers, which devote their best space to accounts of vaudeville, never notice it, and it is impossible to depict the startled look of a publisher asked by a youth to publish a volume of poetry. France seems to be satisfied with two or three poets, and the public mind is loath to burden itself with new names. Yet, below the recognised master, there are poets endowed with talent and genius even, whose work, if it

could be drawn from obscurity, would bear comparison with many a famous and oft quoted passage. It is dull work singing to deaf ears, but present day poets put up with it; although they are well aware that they will not be listened to, they go on riming for themselves and have given up trying to reach the public with their verse. They practice in silence, darkness, and solitude, like those pianists who practice during the night to make their fingers supple, but upon dumb pianos in order not to disturb their neighbours. Such worship of art, such absolute disinterestedness, such fidelity to poetry, which the new city seems resolved to banish from its midst as it was banished from Plato's Republic, without, however, sending it away crowned with flowers, cannot be too highly extolled. So-called practical minds may feel contempt for the dreamers who follow the Muse into the woods, who spend a whole day seeking the fourth rime in a sonnet or the final line in a tercet, and return home at night satisfied with having written a few lines many times altered on their note-book; but these practical people will not have known the poet's pure delight, — the contemplation of nature, the aspiration to the ideal, the bringing of beauty out of the hard form of verse, so difficult to

work out, and which is, as it were, the marble of thought. Yet is it not a worthy and a noble use of the time that men now look upon as money?

Having spoken of young poets, let me open a volume edited by them under the title of "The Contemporary Parnassus," which is a sort of anthology to which each one has contributed a flower. In this nosegay of spring blooms, some few roses of a past season have been admitted, for I appear in it in company with Émile and Antoni Deschamps; but this is merely a kindly act of remembrance on the part of young fellows making their first appearance in the arena and hailing the veterans, who ought, perhaps, to lay down the cestus as did Entellus. The tone of the book is wholly modern and fairly enough represents the present state of poetry. Leconte de Lisle, the central sun of that poetic system, around whom revolve quite a number of stars set on high, to say nothing of certain vagabond comets influenced for a time but soon returning to their vast ellipse in the deep blue sky, — Leconte de Lisle has five or six pieces that suitably indicate the different aspects of his talent. "The Jaguar's Dream" is one of those pictures of tropical nature that he paints in such strong colours. "The Verandah," a sort of sestina,

in which certain rimes recur like refrains, has all the charm of an incantation; "Ekhidna" breathes an archaic and grim Hellenism. Ekhidna, the monstrous and superb daughter of Kallirhoé and Khrysaor, shows at the entrance to her grotto, in order to attract men, her head with its fascinating beauty, her arms whiter than those of Here and her bosom fair as marble of Paros, while in the darkness of the cave her scaly body drags over the bones, polished like ivory, of the lovers she has destroyed. "Hjalmar's Heart," a poem full of Scandinavian savagery, in which the hero, who is dying on the field of battle, calls upon the raven to pluck out of his bosom his bleeding and smoking heart and carry it to Ymer's fair daughter, seems to have been written by a Valküre, while "The Prayer for the Dead," a Vedic hymn filled with deep religious solemnity, would win the approval of the richis and mounis of India, who sit on panther-skins between four braziers.

A little farther are sonnets by Louis Ménard, who is no less an admirer of the genius of Greece than Leconte de Lisle himself. Ménard, who is a scholar, a painter, and a poet, is among moderns one of the men who have best understood Hellenism and penetrated within that sweet and charming civilisation in which

man blossomed out in his full beauty among gods like unto him. Among these sonnets there happens to be one called "Nirvana," in which the author breathes forth his longing for eternal rest and divine nothingness, like all those who are born out of due season, who are weary of the struggles of a life in which they feel no interest, and who are haunted by the nostalgic remembrance of a lost ideal fatherland. Louis Ménard was evidently intended to share in the conversations on Cape Sunium and in the groves of Academe. He is a Greek born two thousand years too late, and when I saw him for the first time, he made me think of that last priest of Apollo whom Julian met in a small demus of Attica, and who was on his way to sacrifice upon the half ruined altar of his god, fallen into desuetude, a goose— for want of anything better.

In "The Gods in Exile," Banville fills an old Druidical forest with the gods that have been driven from Olympus, treating seriously the poetic theme that Heinrich Heine, with his tender scepticism and his mocking sensibility, had treated more lightly. Jupiter, who is once more Zeus, in conformity with the terminology adopted by Leconte de Lisle, is not now a dealer in rabbit-skins in a little island in the North Sea,

and he does not talk old Homeric Greek to sailors from Syra, as the German humourist pretends he does. He is sadly leading beneath the oaks, that no longer, like the grove of Dodona, give forth oracles, the company of ejected Olympians, who express their grief in superb verse, the finest Banville ever wrote.

Catulle Mendès, after having imitated and exaggerated in his own way the Alfred de Musset of "Mardoche," "The Chestnuts," and the "Ballad of the Moon," not as a mere pupil, but as a master already skilful, quickly wearied of his rackety style and his poetic impertinences. He calmed down and, as the saying is, diluted his wine with water. But the water he used was that of the Ganges, and a few drops of the sacred river sufficed to still in the poet's cup the sparkling of champagne. A pandit brought up in Leconte de Lisle's school, he now explains the mysteries of the lotus, sets Yami and Yama talking, sings of the child Krishna and of Kamadeva in verse of wondrous perfection of form, in spite of the difficulty of setting in rhythms the great Hindoo names that resemble those enormous jewels that adorn the housings of elephants. "The Mysteries of the Lotus" are not particularly clear, but obscure things often cast a shadow upon words, and there can

be nothing but praise for the skilful manner in which the tercets of the poem move along in regular order, like the billows of the sea of Amrita, on which floats Purusha on a bed the dais of which is formed by the thousand heads of the serpent Secha, sunk in reverie and watching the mystic lotus springing from his navel. It strikes me that the weird Hindoo mythology, with its many-armed gods, its avatars, its cosmogonic legends, and its inextricable mysteries, as dense as the jungle, is, in spite of all the talent with which it is used, difficult to acclimatise in our poetry, which is somewhat narrow for these immense displays of form and colour.

In the same collection are grouped François Coppée, the author of "The Reliquary," — a charming volume that holds out and fulfils hopes, — Paul Verlaine, Léon Dierx, Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, José Marie de Heredia, whose Spanish name does not prevent his writing very beautiful sonnets in our tongue, Stéphane Mallarmé, whose deliberate extravagance is relieved now and then by poetic flashes, Albert Mérat, who has a sonnet, "Violets," as sweet-scented as its name, Louis Xavier de Ricard, Henry Winter, Robert Luzarche, — in a word, a whole company of young poets of the eleventh hour, who are dreaming, seeking, trying,

working with all their soul and all their might, and who have at least the merit of not having despaired of an art which the public seems to be forsaking. It would be exceedingly difficult, unless I made use of numerous quotations, to give an idea of the manner and characteristics of these young writers, who have not yet quite freed their individuality, and who still seem somewhat uncertain in their aims. Some of them imitate Leconte de Lisle's serene impassibility; others, Banville's harmonious breadth; some, Baudelaire's hard concentration; and some, the grim grandeur of Hugo's later manner, each one, be it well understood, while preserving his own particular accent that mingles with the borrowed sound.

Alfred de Musset, who but some years back moulded more than one talent, does not appear to have much influence over the present generation. Young poets consider him too careless, too free, too poor a rimer, and, why should I not say it, too sensitive, too easily moved, too human, in a word. Self-possession is the fashion nowadays.

A few new "Flowers of Evil" of Baudelaire's bloom out strangely in the centre of the collection, like black roses, and are known at once by their intoxicating scent. "The Jet of water," "The Mala-

braise," "Far Away," and "Bertha's Eyes" show that the poet who has set "in the heaven of art a strange deadly ray and a new shudder" can be also, when it pleases him, a graceful poet, not, it is true, of soft and vague grace, but of that strange, mysterious, and fascinating grace that seduces refined minds.

The present period, though apparently so careless of poetry, is in point of fact so full of poets, or at least of clever verse-makers that if I were to name them all, I should produce a list as long as those in Homer, Rabelais, or Cervantes when Don Quixote tells Sancho Panza the names of the illustrious paladins he believes he sees, through the clouds of dust, in the flock of sheep.

One of the youngest of the new-comers is Sully-Prudhomme, who has already marked himself out from his companions by his easily recognised physiognomy, free from contortions and grimace of originality. In his first volume, dated 1865 and called "Stanzas and Poems," every piece, down to the smallest, has this in its favour, that it is composed, that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, that it has an aim and expresses a definite idea. A sonnet, like an epic poem, has to be planned, and the most difficult thing to compose, in

poetry as in painting, is a single figure. Many authors lose sight of this law in art and their works consequently suffer, for neither perfection of style nor richness of rimes redeems such a fault. At the very outset of this book one comes upon a charming poem, so novel in conception and so delicately wrought that it is impossible to praise it too highly. It is typical of the poet and is entitled "The Rift in the Vase." A beautiful crystal vase, in which is placed a bouquet of vervain, has been lightly struck by a fan, an almost unnoticeable blow that nothing has betrayed, yet the rift, finer than the slenderest hair, is spreading and growing. The vase, meanwhile, appears to be intact, but forbear to touch it, for it would fall to pieces. Its invisible wound is ever bleeding. This is, in truth, Sully-Prudhomme's poetry, — a crystal vase in which is placed a flower and from which the water steals like a tear. The stanzas beginning, "Custom is a stranger," contain an ingenious idea and end with manly advice directed against that apparently humble housekeeper whom no one notices and who ends by becoming the mistress of the house, after having expelled youthful liberty. I have not space to indicate all the remarkable poems in this book; I should have to

take each piece separately, for Sully-Prudhomme's inspiration varies greatly and it is difficult to give a general idea of it. Beams of light, breaths of air, sounds, colours, and forms incessantly modify the poet's state of mind. He hesitates between diverse systems: now he is a believer, now a sceptic; to-day he yields to illusion, to-morrow he is disenchanted; he blesses love and he curses it, he exalts art or nature, and, vaguely pantheistic, he mingles in the universal soul of things. He is sorrowful without weakness, and through his uncertainty one recognises a firm will that is soon to assert itself. A second volume, consisting wholly of sonnets, fulfils every promise held out by the first. In it the poet has set a loftier and deeper thought in a form that henceforth he handles like a master; he can no longer complain, as he does at the close of "Stanzas and Poems," of the powerlessness of his art and compare himself to a musician whose lyre plays him false, or to a sculptor whom the clay refuses to obey. While Sully-Prudhomme usually confines his subjects to small dimensions, he is quite able to undertake great frescoes. "The Stables of Augeas," which are to be read in "The Contemporary Parnassus," are wrought with the firm stroke, the simple tone, and the

breadth of style of a mural painting. The poem might take its place with the other labours of Hercules upon the cella or pronaos of a Greek temple. I am of opinion that if Sully-Prudhomme keeps resolutely on for a few years and does not give up poetry, forsaken by the public, for prose or any other profitable occupation, he is destined to take the first place among our eleventh-hour poets, and that he shall be rewarded as if he had set to work with dawn.

Less of a new-comer than Sully-Prudhomme, Louis Ratisbonne occupies an important place in poetical literature; he is a man capable of hard work and of inspiration. In this age of hurry, when men avoid undertaking lengthy works, unless it be some endless novel thrown off in instalments day by day, it takes astonishing courage, patience, and enthusiasm to translate into verse, with a scrupulous care that does not exclude elegance, the whole of the "Inferno" in the "Divine Comedy," from the first circle to the last. Ratisbonne has proved himself to possess such courage and patience; while still quite young he joined himself to the group of Vergil and Dante and descended into the gloomy depths with them. This sort of hard work is the best possible practice for a verse-maker who

desires to develop his muscle and to become a formidable athlete in the Olympic games of poetry. The one danger to be guarded against is retaining for good and all the grim and proud attitude of the sovereign master whom one has copied, and to remain, like Michael Angelo, after he had painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, with hands and eyes upturned to heaven. It is a risk one loves to run, and Louis Ratisbonne has escaped it. His own original poems are not clouded by the smoke of Dante's Hell; on the contrary, they have a grace, a freshness, and even at times a coquetry that in no wise recall the translator of the old austere Ghibelline. They are charming love poems that, in their simple way, like to adorn themselves from time to time with Shakespearian conceits, and like Goethe's Marguerite to try before a small mirror the jewels left on the table by Mephistopheles. Ratisbonne's Muse, however, does not allow herself to be tempted; she quickly puts back the seducer's gems within the casket, in order to remain what she is, an irreproachable virgin, and to write, with a pen that seems to have been made from the feather plucked from an angel's wing, the chaste and naïve repertory of "The Child's Comedy," a collection that mothers read over

their children's shoulders, and that fathers carry into their study, delighted with an art that conceals itself. Louis Ratisbonne was chosen by Alfred de Vigny, that swan of poetry, to be his literary executor, and he published that writer's last poems. This is the greatest praise that can be accorded to his character and his talent.

In 1852 A. Lacaussade published his "Poems and Landscapes," that were "crowned" by the Academy. Tropical nature, often described but rarely sung, lives again in these landscapes, which are almost all drawn from Mauritius, the poet's native place, in one of the loveliest parts of the Indian Ocean. What the author of "Paul and Virginia" did in prose, Lacaussade thought he might try to do in verse. He confines himself within his island, as willingly as Brizeux does within his Brittany. He has made himself its filial poet; he tells lovingly of its prospects, its heavens, its savannahs, its aspects, now gloomy, now bright; he borrows from it the setting and the background of his pictures. The pieces which seem to me to exhibit most plainly his earlier inspiration are those entitled "Remembrances of Childhood," "The Limit Field," "Cape Bernard," and especially "The Bengali."

A few years later, the poet, far from his enchanted isle, and saddened by nostalgia of blue skies and the bitter experience of life, brought out another book that bears a title expressive of discouragement, — "Wreckage;" as if these lines, that so well deserve to reach port safely with all sail set and with a favouring breeze, had been cast ashore, among the wreckage of ships in some unknown shipwreck. I can understand that on the passage his vessel may have been the sport of the gale, that, in order to lighten it, perhaps, the master may have had to throw overboard many a precious object, but I cannot admit that the ship itself went down. The poet's sadness is a manly sadness; it stands up against grief while accepting it with stoic calm, and does not allow itself to indulge, even at the darkest moments, in that enervating melancholy that softens the soul and deprives it of spring. The courageous idea of duty prevails over passing despair, and the contemplation of nature calms the moral sorrows of the poet. Lacaussade's talent is full of a gentle gravity, of virile resignation, and of a sort of austere charm that is more easily felt than defined. Not only has the poet felt what he sings, he has experienced it, lived it, and his disenchantment is no mere comedy of grief. In

every book there is one piece or passage that sums up the character of the work, and Sainte-Beuve cleverly pointed out the one in which is best heard the note characteristic of Lacaussade. It bears a quaintly pretty title, — "The Roses of Forgetfulness," hybrid flowers the name of which is not to be found in any botanical list, but which are quite in their place in the garden of poesy.

To his "Modern Songs" Maxime Ducamp has prefixed a very remarkable preface, in which the author, with courageous sagacity, seeks to ascertain the causes of the indifference of the public to poetry, instead of merely bewailing the fact. He discovers several such causes: lack of great beliefs, of enthusiasm for noble ideas, lack of passion and human feeling. He adds other reasons: real or deliberate ignorance of life at the present time, of the marvellous inventions due to science and industry, obstinate retrogression into the past, the turning back to old symbols and worn out mythologies, the doctrine of art for art's sake, puerile care for form without regard to thought, — in a word, all the reproaches that can be heaped upon poor poets who cannot help themselves.

Then he endeavours to apply his theories, and in

doing so expends much talent, energy, and will. If inspiration is frightened away by a subject that is too modern or too refractory, he forces it and drags from it verse that has at least the merit of being sober, correct, and well turned. He sings the wonders of matter, of the electric telegraph, of the locomotive engine, the dragon of iron and fire. While reading this piece, which is unquestionably well written, I remembered a painting by Turner which I saw in London, and which represents a train rushing at full speed along a viaduct in a tremendous storm of wind and rain. It is a cataclysm, absolutely. Blazing lightning, wings like those of great birds of fire, Babel cloud-towers falling in ruins under the thunderbolts, downpours of rain turned to spray by the gale, something that seems to be the setting of the end of the world. And through it all the locomotive engine, its glass eyes glaring red in the darkness, writhing like the dragon in Revelation, and dragging after it, like an immense tail, its vertebræ formed of carriages. It was unquestionably a sketch dashed off with mad fury, confounding earth and sky with a single stroke of the brush, a perfect piece of extravagance, but the work of a madman of genius. It would perhaps be possible to extract poetry at less cost

from the steam-engine, which our writers fail to admire adequately, but the poem which Ducamp has devoted to the iron steed that is to take the place of Pegasus, would be all the better for a little of Turner's disorder and fantastic effects.

Fortunately a number of delightful pieces have found their way into the "Modern Songs." They are variations upon the three old themes, beauty, nature, and love, which have hitherto sufficed for poets who care little for novelties. Maxime Ducamp is always most successful when he departs from the programme he has laid out for himself; the proof of this is to be found in "Love Sonnets," "Turkish Women," "Life in the Desert," and especially in "The Demolished House," in which a sorrowful remembrance sits on the ruins in the attitude of Albert Dürer's angel, and recalls in harmonious stanzas the joys, the griefs, the losses, and the peaceful hours of study that have been sheltered in those walls now falling under the pickaxe. Allowing for the difference in proportions, this poem represents the "Sadness of Olympio" in this book.

Regardless of Maxime Ducamp's theories, poetry concerns itself uncommonly little with the present, and keeps on looking back to the past instead of gazing

upon the future. André Lefèvre's "Pan's Pipe" is a proof of this. His inspiration is purely that of antiquity, and a breath of the great god Pan fills the reeds of his unequal pipe. A short preface of two pages, from which I quote the following lines, sums up the æsthetic beliefs of the author, and gives a clearer view of his character than I can: "Whether they be serene meditations or passionate plaints, idyls of antiquity or love poems, all the pictures here brought together, no matter how varied the subject and the style, are linked together by my belief in the life of things. My inspiration has come to me from without, and if there remain any part of my old self in my work, if the objects I have touched preserve an almost human look, it is because the mind unites with what it embraces and penetrates what it animates. It seeks in vain to be but an echo; it must ever be an interpreter. Sometimes I describe solitary scenes, woods, mountains, and seas left to themselves; sometimes I have set within a small frame ideas half transformed into images; sometimes again, young and lovely women appear on the edge of a wood and sport to the sound of invisible pipes, but no matter what the colour or what the face may be, it is nature, living as hours and

seasons have made it; nature, the enchantress which presides over the birth of flowers, the involuntary upspringing of amorous instincts; the consoler that soothes and appeases unsatisfied desire; the Cybele of antiquity, in a word, on whom the Greeks bestowed so many different names, so many divine faces."

It will be seen that André Lefèvre is, in poetry at least, frankly pantheistic. Forms continually emerge from the matrix of matter only to drop back into it ere-long and to rise from it again. In the mould of ideas matter in fusion flows and hardens until the contours can no longer contain it. The universal soul passes from the mineral to the plant, from the plant to animal, from the animal to man. Prodigal life fights with miserly death that calls for the elements it has lent her, and unconscious nature remains silent, for it is voiceless and can only echo the voice of man, or of humanity rather.

The world is like Prometheus the Titan; the funereal vulture picks at its ever-renewed liver. Life and death are but the recomposition and the decomposition of forms that, under the veil of colour, undergo unending metamorphoses, and Spinoza's eternal matter is leavened, in the ceaseless fermentation, by the perpetual

"becoming" of Hegel. The poet develops these thoughts with wondrous force of style and quiet grandeur, truly worthy of antiquity. In his verse images cling to philosophical thoughts and hang upon them like draperies that allow the form they hide, and the contours of which they caress, to be guessed at. He clothes abstractions in shimmering colours; everything palpitates, shines, moves, and even the shortest poems are animated by the mighty swarming of nature in labour. Even when he treats of such subjects as Leda and Danaë, the poet, going beyond the mythological fact, discovers a cosmogonic meaning in the fable. Danaë, a captive in her brazen prison, is earth locked in the frozen embrace of winter waiting until the golden beams rain down upon her to fertilise her. Leda is humanity uniting with nature, and from that hymn is born Helen, that is, perfect beauty. It may be that these are somewhat subtile interpretations, but they are in no wise repugnant to the genius of Hellas, and as they do not in the least impair the clearness of the lines or the charm of the colouring, as, besides, myths though they are, Leda and Danaë remain none the less exquisite figures that Greek sculpture would gladly admit, and which shine with the sparkling whiteness of the

marble of Paros, the poet can hardly be reproached with being too ingenious. Even now, André Lefèvre, it seems to me, may be put down as a star of the first magnitude in the poetic Pleiades of the present day.

After "Pan's Pipe" André Lefèvre published "My own Lyre," a second volume in which his inspiration, freer, more personal, and less confounded in the great whole, has warmed up and acquired colour like Pygmalion's statue when the marble flushed with the tints of flesh. "My Own Lyre" equals, if it does not surpass, "Pan's Pipe," and its chords respond as readily to the poet's touch as the reeds joined with wax breathed harmoniously at his lips.

Recently he brought out a metrical translation of the "Bucolics," and by way of contrast included in the same volume a translation, also in verse, of a Sanscrit poem by Kalidasa, "The Messenger Cloud," than which no subject was better fitted to attract André Lefèvre's descriptive pen. His skill enables him to disport himself amid comparisons borrowed from a nature and manners entirely novel and even foreign to European readers. By bringing together in the same book Vergil and Kalidasa, Latin antiquity and Hindoo antiquity, he enables us to enjoy comparative

literature, while at the same time he usefully employs his admirable talent for versification. It is impossible to turn poetic leisure to better account.

Emmanuel des Essarts, although he has already published two or three volumes of verses, "Elevations" and "Parisian Poems," and is now at work upon another, — some fragments of which have appeared in literary reviews under the somewhat peculiar title "Idyls of the Revolution," — is none the less quite young and a very recent new-comer. His poetic talent is served by knowledge acquired through hard study, and I am not of those who believe that knowledge harms inspiration; on the contrary, it is a pinion that aids the poet to soar above the crowd. Brought up in the knowledge of Greek and Roman antiquity, des Essarts mixes it in happy proportions with the most recent modernity. At times the fashionable dress worn by his Muse in "Parisian Poems" has tunic-like folds and recalls chaste Greek statues. Antique beauty fitly corrects the merely pretty, and prevents its turning into coquettishness. A drop of the old mythological nectar occasionally falls within his glass of champagne and prevents its sparkling too much. It is desirable to encourage such exceedingly difficult

poetic attempts, which call for the most delicate taste, to bring back to poetic form the things of every-day life, our manners, our habits, our entertainments, our black-coated sadness, our melancholy in ball-gowns, the beauties we like and whom we admire on the stairs of the Opera, to whom we present Parma violets, to whom we address sonnets, and with whom, in a word, we are in love. Artists are constantly reproached with not drawing their inspiration from their own times, and with seeking in the past subjects they might readily find around them did they only take the trouble to look. But routine has such a hold upon us that the smallest familiarly modern detail, though readily accepted in prose, shocks us in verse. Byron's dandyism and sarcasm have to be exaggerated if it is desired to make the public accept reproductions of the life it sees every day, even if these pictures are set in gilt frames and hung upon splendid walls. Mundane elegance yields with difficulty to the exigencies of rhythm, and it is to the credit of des Essarts that he has compelled it to do so without depriving it of any of its freedom or its grace. He never finds verse resist him; he does as he pleases with it, and he is a millionaire of rich rimes. In

"Elevations" the author is free to spread wings of lyricism that would be scorched in the flame of drawing-room tapers; he soars in the blue, driving the swarm of strophes before him, and alights on the lofty summits only.

If on the one hand Emmanuel des Essarts' "Parisian Poems" take us to balls, on the other Theuriet's "The Road to the Woods" takes us back to the country, and it is wise to follow him under the leafy shade where he wanders as did melancholy Jacques in the forest in "As You Like It," passing remarks upon the trees, the flowers, the grass, the birds, the flying deer, the charcoal burner seated on the threshold of his hut of branches. Theuriet is delicate, discreet, and somewhat shy; his work is filled with the coolness, the shadows, and the silence of the woods, while the figures that enliven his landscapes glide by noiselessly over the mossy carpet, remaining in the memory and appearing against a background of verdure, gilded by a slanting sunbeam. There is in Theuriet something that recalls the tender earnestness and soft grace of Hégésippe Moreau's "The Farmer's Wife."

Next to Theuriet, in order to keep the tone intact, might be mentioned Auguste Desplaces, a delightful

poet who, terrified by the bustle of Paris, long since took refuge in the district of Creuse, and who has occasionally published in *l'Artiste* some exquisite poems, the joy of the cultured; elegies dreamed or felt and rimed at leisure in solitude. I do not know whether these poems, known to true amateurs of poetry, have been collected into a volume and have thus reached a wider public.

Many a page have I already written, yet my task is far from done. I shall have to be satisfied with merely mentioning the verses of André Lemoyne, so tender in sentiment, so delicately and artistically wrought; the poems of Gustave Levavasseur, so Norman in flavour, and from which many a flower might be culled for an anthology; those of his friend Ernest Prarond; the versified romances of Valery Vernier; the small pieces of Eugène Grenier, so often "crowned" by the Academy; Armand Renaud's "Love;" Glatigny's "Creepers" and "Golden Arrows," many a one of which flies high and far, as an illustrious critic has said; Alfred Busquet's poem of "The Hours;" Philoxène Boyer's "Two Seasons," in which the eloquent orator of the Quai Malaquais, who is at the same time a true poet, has told of his joys, alas! too few, of his sorrows,

and of his resignation; Nicolas Martin's "Mariska," the work of a man at once German and French, on whose talent falls a bluish beam of the Teuton moon; and the poems of Auguste de Châtillon, painter, sculptor, and poet, whose verse might at times be mistaken for old ballads or old popular songs, so true are they in feeling and so artless in form.

Of a different kind are Eugène Manuel's "Intimacies," which were "crowned" by the Academy; the poems of Stéphane du Halga, who sings of Breton nature with the feeling of Brizeux and the swing of Alfred de Musset; Thalès Bernard's idyls; the rustic pictures of Max Buchon, who is a sort of Courbet in poetry, a thorough realist and also very true, which is not the same thing; the "Donaniel" of Grandet, who appears to have attended the school of Mardoche, Hassan, and Rafael, the gentleman of France; the clever and graceful poems of Alphonse Daudet, Bataille, Amédée Rolland, and so many others that the list might be indefinitely prolonged.

The farther I proceed with my task the more complex does it become and the more difficult to carry out. As I study my materials I come upon works that I do not know, names with which I am unacquainted or

imperfectly acquainted, though they deserve to stand out in the fullest light; but they are so numerous that it would take many volumes to give even a bald idea of them. Three or four shelves of my library are laden with volumes of verse published within the last few years, and the collection is far from being complete.

Let me be permitted to make a comparison. You have left the town in order to think undisturbed; you enter a small wood the outer trees of which show at the far end of the plain. Across the grass, seldom traversed, there is a narrow path which you follow and by the side of which, at the foot of the oaks, and half hidden under the withered leaves of last autumn, you can smell the violets. In the branches that sway and whisper in the breeze, you hear the warbling of some invisible bird that flies off as you draw near and which you catch sight of as it wings its way rapidly to some other shelter. You pick a few violets, you note the bird's song, and you pursue your walk. Soon the wood changes into a forest; clearings open up like verdant drawing-rooms; the springs babble between the mossy stones and form mirrors in which the deer come to gaze at themselves. The violets grow bolder and ask to be picked; your little bouquet becomes a

sheaf of bloom to which you add the silver bells of the lily of the valley, the pretty rose heath, and all the wild flora of the woods. From the trees, the bushes, the thickets, from the depths of the forest rise innumerable voices singing together, the song of the bullfinch, of the goldfinch, of the robin red-breast, of the chaffinch, of the wagtail, of the blackbird, of the tomtit, and over all, jays and magpies calling dissonantly in the general harmony. By dint of attention you succeed in making out the part taken by each bird in the concert, you distinguish its peculiar note, its trills and runs; you can give a name to each of the flowers in your already huge bouquet. But the forest holds innumerable birds whose song you have not heard, for they sing at another hour or in thickets to which no path leads. Violets as pure, as fresh, as sweet-scented as those of which your bunch of bloom is composed, grow in solitude on banks where no human eye sees them. They fade in silence and mystery without their perfume having been ever inhaled by any one. Meanwhile evening comes on, and feeling fatigued, you say to yourself: "Since I cannot reckon up all the birds and all the violets, I shall award the prize to the nightingale and the rose." Soon the nightingale breaks

out in an amazing burst of notes that shatters the silence like musical fireworks, but, as it is taking breath, another nightingale begins, and its song is no less lovely; then a third, equally talented, commences in its turn. You go to the rose bush, but the rose is not alone; it is surrounded with companions as beauteous as she, to say nothing of the young buds that have not as yet undone their green velvet corsets. Night has fallen. In the distance rolls by, with long streamer of smoke and strident whistle, a railway train. The travellers are returning to the town; not one of them has thought of stopping in the woods where sing the birds and bloom the violets. But, after all, has not humanity something else to do besides listening to songs and breathing in scents? Yet pity 't is that so many lovely things should go to waste! Well, poetry is prodigal, like nature.

Now, as I am drawing to a close, I notice an omission in my work. I have not spoken of women poets. Mmes. Desbordes-Valmore, Amable Tastu, Delphine de Girardin, Anaïs Ségalas, belong to a previous period, but the lyre is still struck by women's hands, and the office of the Tenth Muse is still well filled, although the number of priestesses has diminished greatly, the

novel quickly drawing to itself those ladies who have a vocation for verse.

Mme. Ackermann, who, it seems to me, deserves at this moment to wear the Muse's golden bays, is the widow of a distinguished philologist, and reads Greek and Sanscrit poems in the original text. The volume she has published under the title "Tales and Poems," contains both translations and original pieces. She belongs neither to the Romanticist school nor to that of Leconte de Lisle; she goes farther back, and her familiar verse, which readily lends itself to all the digressions of the tale, recalls somewhat the dreamy kindliness of La Fontaine. This is a note infrequently heard nowadays, and which fills one with pleasant surprise. However, if Mme. Ackermann is related to the seventeenth-century writer, she is wholly of her own times in the feeling that inspires the poems in which she speaks in her own name. She belongs to the school of the great melancholy poets, Chateaubriand, Byron, Shelley, Leopardi, those eternally sad geniuses who suffered from the woe of life, and whose inspiration is always sad. Their disappointments, the bitterness they have endured, the weariness they feel, they veil under a faint, forced smile, for their sorrow has its

pride, and Lara and the Giaour do not lament in commonplace fashion. But it is plain from the subjects that Mme. Ackermann loves to treat, — endless sleep, eternal night, Death the Deliverer, — that, like the Italian poet, she has learned to taste the charm of death. She dreads remembrance because it renews suffering. A very competent critic, Lacaussade, thus spoke of her: "There is lofty inspiration in some of her poems; for instance in 'The Unfortunates,' in which the weariness of life is superbly expressed. The spirit of the great elegiac poets of our day makes itself felt in this poem by a contemporary.

"Painful scepticism, philosophical doubt, protests of the conscience against the riddle of life, the inextricable mingling of good and evil, revolt of the reason crying out despairingly, —

'He who was almighty willed that pain should be,' —

all the anguish of the soul, are expressed in beautiful verse in Mme. Ackermann's 'Prometheus.'"

Mme. Blanchecotte has a very different poetical temperament. She won the approval of the Academy for her first book, "Dreams and Realities." A pupil of Lamartine, she has preserved the master's lyrical form and movement, and has added to them a deep,

individual accent that recalls Mme. Valmore. Like her, Mme. Blanchecotte often breaks out into vehement bursts of passion of the most poignant sincerity; real tears choke her utterance, and she may say truthfully, "My poor lyre is my soul itself."

Born in an obscure and poor station in life, she has risen from it by dint of persevering efforts. She is really self-made. A worker through necessity, she managed to find time to educate herself to a degree not often attained by women. She knows English, German, and Latin even, she is widely read, and, in a word, has so strengthened her intellect that she is in no danger of yielding to the impulse of her heart. She has written in good prose moral pages that prove that, though an elegiac poet, she can observe as well as feel. Béranger thought highly of her, and Sainte-Beuve has a high opinion of her character and her talent. She is Lamartine's friend, and a constant visitor to his sad and lonely hearth. It is worthy of note, for the fact is uncommon, that Mme. Blanchecotte collaborated in the publication of the "Quatrains of Khayam," a Persian poet whose lyrical mysticism is more highly wrought even than that of Hafiz and Sadi. She it was who read the proofs.

Nor is this all; French poets are not found in France alone. Ancient Armorica still has bards and Provence troubadours. Brizeux, the author of "Marie," is also the author of "Leiz-Breiz," a volume of verse in pure Celtic. Quite recently, a Breton, M. Luzel, who sings in the tongue of the bard Guiclan, published a number of local legends of which I can appreciate the poetry only by means of the parallel translation. Of course I miss the merits of the style and of the structure of the verse; in order to enjoy these properly one has to be a descendant of the Kymri, a lad of Morbihan or Cornwall, with great breeches and long hair.

The mother tongue of Southern France is the "langue d'oc" that was spoken by King René, and in which Richard Coeur-de-lion and Frederick of Hohenstauffen rimed their "sirventes." This tongue, which did not amalgamate with the French as did the "langue d'oïl," but remained faithful to its origins, provided a great poet in the full strength of his genius with an admirable instrument. Every one knows I mean Mistral, even people who know the particular idiom he employs as little as they do Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese. Everybody has read "Mireïo," that poem filled with sunshine and blue sky, in which the

scenes and manners of the South are painted in suc warm and luminous colours, in which love speaks wit the same passionate candour as in an idyl of Theoc ritus, in a dialect that in sweetness, harmony, rhythm and richness, is in no wise inferior to Greek and Latin Its success was greater than any one had dared t hope for a book written in a tongue unknown to mos readers. Frédéric Mistral, who knows French alsc added to the original text an excellent translation, s that almost all the charm of the original was preserved as in those *Lieder* of Heinrich Heine's which he trans lated himself. "Calendau" is a legend drawn fron the history of Provence, and, considering the way it i told, the interest of the episodes, the brilliancy of th pictures, the grandeur and life-likeness of the charac ters, and the heroic swing of the style, deserves to b called an epic.

Like Tommasso Grossi and Carlo Porta de Milan the author of "The Vision of Prina," proclaimed b Stendhal the finest piece of modern poetry, like Baff and Buratti of Venice, who had the honour of strikin the key-note for Byron's Beppo and Don Juan, Mis tral is unfortunate enough to be a great poet in tongue that, unhappily, is understood but of a smal

number. It is true that he himself does not look at the matter in that light, for he holds that French is circumscribed within eight or ten of the central departments, while in some thirty others it is Basque, Spanish, Celtic, German, Walloon, Italian that are spoken, to say nothing of the dialects, while on the other hand Provençal, or the "langue d'oc" is spoken by fifteen millions of men.

Next to Mistral it is only right to place Aubanel, the author of "The Half-Open Pomegranate," whose verse is as ruddy and fresh as the rubies that show through the open golden skin of that eminently Southern fruit.

III

IN this study I have confined myself to the figures of the new men, assigning to them an important place, for they it was whom I had first to make known. But meanwhile the masters of song themselves have not been silent. Victor Hugo has published "Contemplations," "The Legend of the Ages," and "Songs of the Streets and the Woods," three volumes of mark, in which are met with again, but developed in unexpected ways, the qualities that were admired in his "Orientales" and "Autumn Leaves." The "Contemplations" mark the beginning of Victor Hugo's third manner, for poets are like painters in that there are easily recognised phases of their talent. The assiduous practice of art, the constant teaching of life, the changes in temperament due to age, the broadening of the point of view, all these causes combine to impart a particular aspect to works according to the time at which these have been produced. Thus the Raphael of the "Sposalizio," of the "Belle Jardinière," and of the "Madonna with the Veil" is not the Raphael

of the Loggie of the Vatican and of the "Transfiguration." The Rembrandt who painted the "Lesson of Anatomy" does not much resemble the Rembrandt of the "Night Watch," while one would scarcely suspect in the Dante of the "Vita Nuova" that Dante who wrote the "Divine Comedy."

While the genius of other masters becomes bent, weak, and wrinkled with years, age seems to add new strength, new vigour, and fresh beauty to that of Hugo. He grows old in lion fashion; his brow, furrowed with august wrinkles, bears a longer and thicker mane, more formidably wild than of yore. His brazen talons have grown, and his yellow eyes resemble suns in a cavern. When he roars, all animals remain dumb. He may also be compared to the oak that o'ertops the forest; the huge, rugged trunk sends out in every direction branches as thick as ordinary trees and curiously twisted; its deep-plunging roots draw sap from the heart of the earth, and its head almost touches the high heavens. At night the stars shine through its mass of foliage, and in the morning it is alive with the song of birds. It resists heat and cold, wind, rain, and thunder; the very strokes of the lightning merely add a splendid grimness to its beauty.

In the "Contemplations" the part entitled "Of Yore" is bright as the dawn, and that called "To-Day" is richly coloured like the sunset. While the edge of the horizon is lighted up with a blaze of gold, topaz, and purple, cold violet shadows grow at the extremities; there is more darkness in the work, and through the obscurity the sunbeams flash like lightnings. More intense black brings out the well placed lights, and each sparkling point flames in dread fashion like a cabalistic microcosm. The poet's saddened soul seeks deep, mysterious, sombre expressions, and seems to be listening, in the attitude of Michael Angelo's "Pensiero," to the words of "The Shadow Mouth."

Regret has often been expressed that France possesses no epic poem. It is a fact that Greece has the Iliad and the Odyssey, Rome the Æneid, Italy the Divine Comedy, Orlando Furioso, and Jerusalem Delivered, Spain the Romancero and the Araucana, Portugal the Lusiad, and England Paradise Lost. Over against this we can set the "Henriade" only, truly a meagre feast, for the poems of the Carlovingian cycle are written in a tongue that scholars alone can understand. Now, however, if we do not yet possess a regular epic poem in twelve or twenty-four cantos, Victor Hugo has at

least given us the small change of one in the "Legend of the Ages," a currency struck with the effigies of every epoch and of every civilisation upon medals of gold of the purest metal. The two volumes comprise, as a matter of fact, a dozen epic poems, concentrated, rapid, and condensing in a small space the aspect, the colour, and the character of an age or of a country.

As one reads the "Legend of the Ages" one seems to be wandering in a vast cloister, a sort of *Campo Santo* of poetry, the walls of which are covered with frescoes painted by a marvellous artist who is familiar with every style, and who, according to the subject he has chosen, passes from the almost Byzantine stiffness of Orcagna to the Titanic boldness of Michael Angelo, representing with equal skill knights in plate armour and nude giants swelling their invincible muscles. Each picture gives one the living, lifelike, deep impression of a vanished age. Legend is history, with its innumerable artless and picturesque details, seen through the imagination of the people, with its fancy portraits that are truer than real portraits, its exaggerated characters, its swollen heroism, and its fabulous poetry taking the place of science, which is often merely conjectural.

The "Legend of the Ages," in the mind of the

author, is but a partial cartoon of a colossal fresco which the poet means to complete, unless the mysterious breath extinguishes his lamp in the middle of his work; for here below no man can be sure of completing what he has begun. The subject is man, or humanity rather, traversing the various environments due to barbarism or relative civilisation, and constantly progressing from darkness to light. This thought is not expressed in philosophical and declamatory fashion; it springs from the very essence of things. Although the work is unfinished, it is nevertheless a complete whole. Each period is represented by an important and characteristic picture, and one that is always absolutely perfect in itself. The fragmentary poem proceeds first from Eve to Jesus Christ, and the Biblical world is revived in scenes of the highest sublimity and of a richness of colouring unequalled by any painter. It is enough to mention "Conscience," "The Lions," and "The Sleep of Boaz," incomparable in beauty, breadth, and grandeur, and written with the inspiration and the power of the prophets. "The Decadence of Rome" reads like a chapter from Tacitus turned into verse by Juvenal. But now the poet had assimilated the Bible; now, in order to paint Mahomet, he so fills

himself with the Koran that he might pass for a son of Islam, for Abu Bekr or Ali. In the part he has entitled "The Christian Heroic Cycle" Victor Hugo has summed up, in three or four short poems such as "The Marriage of Roland," "Aymerillot," "Bivar," "Twelfth Night," the vast epics of the Carlovingian cycles. They are as mighty as Homer and as simple as a child's book. In "Aymerillot," the legendary figure of white-bearded Charlemagne stands out in heroic kindliness among the twelve peers of France, drawn as sharply as the effigies carved upon funeral slabs and as richly coloured as stained-glass windows, while the whole of the proud, feudal familiarity of the "Romancero" lives again in the poem called "Bivar."

The semi-fabulous heroes of history are succeeded by the heroes of fiction, just as the epic poems were followed by the romances of chivalry. Knights-errant start on their travels in search of adventures and of wrongs to be righted; they are masked justices, steel-clad spectres, dreaded equally by tyrants and wizards. With their lances they slay imaginary and real monsters, wizard steeds, or traitors. Barons in Europe, in Asia they are lords of some strange city with golden domes and saw-like crenellations. They are always

returning from some distant journey and their armour bears the marks of the claws of the lions they have crushed to death in their arms. Eviradnus, to whom the author has devoted a whole poem, is the most admirable personification of knight-errantry, and might justify Don Quixote's craze, so great, courageous, and good is he, and so constantly ready to take the part of the weak against the strong. Most dramatic is the way in which he saves Mahaud from the snares spread for her by big Joss and little Zeno. In his description of the manor of Corbus, half ruined and whelmed by the winter gales and rains, the poet has obtained symphonic effects which it might well have been thought were unattainable to speech. The verse moans, swells, storms, and roars, like Beethoven's orchestra; through the rimes one hears the howling of the wind, the lashing of the rain, the swishing of the bushes on the top of the towers, the falling of the stones into the moats, and the low roar of the sombre forest that clasps the old castle and seeks to stifle it. With the sounds of the tempest mingle the plaints of the spirits and the ghosts, the vague lament of things, the terror of solitude and the yawn of desolation. It is the finest musical composition ever performed upon a lyre.

The description of the hall in which the Marchioness Mahaud, according to the custom of Lusace, is to spend the night before her investiture, is not less wonderful. The double line of ancestral suits of armour, placed upon horses covered with steel, shield on arm, lance in rest, wearing huge morions, and seen at times in the darkness of the gallery in a lightning flash of gold, steel, or bronze, has a spectral, formidable, heraldic aspect. The eye of the poet seer separates the phantom from the object, and mingles the chimerical and the real in that due proportion which is poetry itself.

In "Zim-Zizimi" and in "Sultan Mourad" we are shown the East of the Middle Ages with its fabulous splendour, its shimmering of gold and its phosphorescence of carbuncles against a background of murder and conflagration, with strange peoples come from places of which geographers scarce know the names. The conversation between Zim-Zizimi and the ten white marble sphinxes, crowned with roses, is sublimely poetical. The weary King puts his questions, and Nothingness replies with hopeless monotony with some ghostly tale.

Perhaps the most striking and splendid passage in the whole book is that which forms the opening part

of "Ratbert." Of all poets Victor Hugo alone was capable of writing it. Ratbert has summoned to meet upon the square at Ancona, for the purpose of discussing a proposed expedition, his most illustrious knights and barons, the flower of that heraldic and genealogical tree that feeds on Italy's poisoned sap. Each one shows out in proud attitude, drawn with a single stroke from his crest to his armed heel, with his coat of arms, his titles, his connections, his characteristic point summed up in a single word or a single hemistich. The sonorous syllables of their splendidly strange names, squarely set in the verse, sound like trumpet blasts, and pass by in the magnificent march past with a sound of arms and spurs.

There is no one who knows the worth of names as well as Victor Hugo; he always manages to discover strange, sonorous, characteristic ones that mark the bearer and remain ineffaceably imprinted in the memory. The song of the "Adventurers of the Sea" is a striking example of this power. The rimes send back to each other, as a shuttlecock is sent back by the battledores, the quaint names of these scourers of the main, escaped convicts drawn from every land, and a single name is sufficient to describe from head to foot any one of

these picturesque rascals with a port like that of the figures in Salvator Rosa's sketches or Callot's etchings.

An astonishing poem too is the one in which the Renaissance is characterised and which bears the title "The Satyr." In this mighty pantheistic symphony the poet's sov'ran hand strikes every one of the chords of the lyre. Gradually the poor bestial man of the woods, whom Hercules has carried up into Olympus by the ear and who is compelled to sing, becomes transfigured by the splendour of inspiration and assumes such colossal proportions that the Olympians are terrified; for the shapeless satyr, a god but half emerged out of matter, is none else than Pan, the great Whole, whose ancestors are but partial incarnations that shall once again be reabsorbed into his mighty bosom.

Then there is that painting that seems to have been wrought out with Velasquez' brush, "The Infanta's Rose." Marvellous is the feeling of Spanish Court life and etiquette! How plainly is the little Princess seen in her childish gravity and her early consciousness that one day she is to be a queen; in her stiff silver cloth skirt embroidered with jet, she watches the wind carrying off one after another the petals of her rose and scattering them upon the dark surface of the pond,

while, pressing his brow against the pane of one of the windows of the palace, is seen the wan face of Philip II, thinking of his distant Armada, a prey mayhap to the gale and destroyed by the same wind that scatters the petals of the flower.

The volume ends in Biblical fashion with a sort of apocalypse. "The Open Sea," "The Broad Heavens," "The Trump of the Last Judgment" are each and all poems that treat of the time that is not. In them one catches a glimpse of the future far down one of those flaming openings that the genius of poets manages to make in the unknown, a sort of tunnel full of darkness at its mouth but showing at the other extremity a brilliant point of light. The trump of the Last Judgment that awaits the end of all things and meanwhile holds within its vast brazen crater the terrific call which is to wake the dead in every valley of Jehoshaphat, is one of the most amazing inventions of the human mind. It might have been written in Patmos, with an eagle for desk, in the hallucination of prophecy. Never have the inexpressible and yet unthought been reduced to the forms of inarticulate speech, as Homer says, in more splendid and masterful fashion. It really seems as though the poet had

heard and noted down the mysterious whisperings of the infinite in that region where there is neither contour nor colour, neither darkness nor light, neither time nor space.

The "Songs of the Streets and the Woods," as the title indicates, mark the occurrence in the poet's career of a sort of period of rest and, as it were, of the vacation of genius. He leads the spirited steed, by comparison with which the classical Pegasus is but a quiet cob, and that the Alexanders of poetry alone can ride, to the green fields of the idyl, there to graze upon pastures fresh and flowers new. But it is hard for that dread courser, wild-maned, with fiery nostrils, hoofs that strike stars instead of sparks, and that leaps from one of the summits of the ideal to another amid storms and thunders, — it is hard for that courser to stay still, and one cannot help feeling that were it not hobbled, it would return, with a few strokes of its mighty wings, to the giddy summits and the bottomless abysses. While his terrible steed is turned out to grass, the poet indulges in all manner of delightful fancies. He turns back the course of time and becomes young again. He is no longer the sov'ran master, admired of all men, but the youth who, wearying of his small chamber, strays

through the streets and the woods in pursuit of maid and butterfly. Any girl and any site is good enough for him; Meudon is a Tivoli, and Jane is an Amaryllis. The washerwomen answer very well for Leda in the reeds, and the geese will do for swans, while the cheap wine of Argenteuil tastes like nectar in the coarse glasses of the tavern. The poet's imagination transforms everything and lights up the paunch of the vulgar pitcher with a sparkle of ideal.

In this volume Victor Hugo has forsaken the Alexandrine verse and all its pomp, making use of verses of seven or eight syllables and of short stanzas. But wonderful is the execution! Never has the poetic scale been played upon by a hand at once lighter and mightier. The most perfect rhythmical difficulties are overcome one after another with incomparable ease and grace. Liszt, Thalberg, and Dreyschok are nowhere beside him. Then, at the end of the volume, the poet springs on his steed and with a touch of the spur flies off into the infinite.

From beyond the tomb Alfred de Vigny holds out to us in his shadowy hand his volume, "Destinies," the finest of his works, I fancy, in which there is a masterpiece of proud sorrow and stout-hearted melancholy, —

the poem called "Samson." The Hebrew Hercules is well aware that he has been betrayed by Delilah, and, disgusted with the courtesan's petty tricks, voluntarily allows himself to be caught in the net that he could, did he wish it, break with a single effort. But why should he do so? Does not a man's love ever bring about deceit in woman? —

"Woman, sickly child, infinitely impure!"

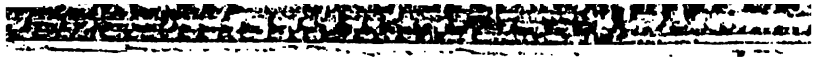
As well be done with it all at once. Never have the satiety of heroism and the weariness of strength been rendered in such magnificent verse.

The republication of Sainte-Beuve's work has brought to light additional poems by the learned critic, which are exquisitely charming and rarely delicate. Auguste Barbier, the writer of the "Iambics" appears in the "Sylphs" in the light of a fresh, graceful poet entering upon his career unaware that he is famous, and who sings of love and nature as though he were but twenty years old, while Alfred de Musset adds to his works a few poems in which beats his ever sensitive heart, and which are written with his customary cavalier grace.

A poet who, while still young, had played a lofty

part, the part of a precursor, and who succeeded in introducing naturalness and freshness into poetic forms that, until he came, seemed to dread those very qualities, Lebrun, the author of "The Cid of Andalusia" and the "Poem of Greece," proved, by publishing a complete edition of his works in 1858, that even as early as the times of the First Empire there were many efforts made to reach those green oases of poetry discovered since then, and that he was one of the first to divine them, as sailors divine the approach of land by the sweet-scented breath of the gale.

And now what conclusion is to be drawn from this lengthy work? Of a truth it would be hard to say. Which of all the poets whose work I have examined shall write his name in the glorious consecrated way like Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset? Time alone can tell.



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